

CUR-406205-15-KP352

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

Communalism and India's Past <i>S. S. Sharma</i>	3
Encounter and Efflorescence: Genesis of the Medieval Civilization <i>M. Athar Ali</i>	13
On Some Recent Trends in the Indian Economy <i>Ashok Mitra</i>	29
DISCUSSION: Ancient Indian Political History: Possibilities and Pitfalls <i>Vivekanand Jha</i>	36
NOTE Spatial Spread of Multinational Corporations in Developing Countries and Some Related Aspects <i>Swapna Banerjee-Guha</i>	55
NOTE Sita in the TV Uttararamayana <i>Sukumari Bhattacharji</i>	66
DOCUMENT Statement on the Indian Economy	72
DOCUMENT The Political Abuse of History	76
REVIEW ARTICLE Responses to Risk and Crisis <i>Shereen Ratnagar</i>	83
BOOK REVIEWS	96

200-201

# **SOCIAL SCIENTIST**

VOLUME 18

NUMBERS 1-2

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1990

## **ADVISORY EDITORS**

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekedath  
Jacob Eapen

## **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## **CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT**

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

### **Inland**

Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250

(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R.Krishnan  
D.Raghunandan  
C.Rajamohan  
C.P.Chandrasekhar

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

Rajendra Prasad

## **EDITOR**

Prabhat Patnaik

## **EDITORIAL OFFICE**

424, V.P.House  
New Delhi 110 001

## **Foreign (In US Dollars)**

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

KP 3570

## **NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS**

Due to escalating costs we are constrained to revise the subscription rates for *Social Scientist* from issue nos. 190-191. The revised rates are as follows:

Single Issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual subscription (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual subscription (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual subscription (students)	Rs. 75
Subscription for 2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
Subscription for 3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250

While these rates will come into effect with issue nos. 190-191, those who have already subscribed would continue to get the journal at the old rates till their subscription expires.

Please also note the change in address. The new address is 15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
15/15, Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.



## Editorial

15

For those concerned with the defence of democracy and the integrity of the country, the growing communalisation of Indian society provides the main political challenge in our time. This has resulted not merely in an interest in the social basis of communal trends and their political articulation, but also in the historical roots of the process of communalisation. In this issue we include two such studies relating to communalism and India's past. The first by R.S. Sharma begins with a delineation of the varied sources of religious beliefs—those grounded in material reality and those necessitated by the need to sustain the inequity implicit in the social order at different times in the past. Given this close relationship between religions and the social and material circumstances in which they originated, reform movements became inevitable when those circumstances themselves changed. But over time, the zeal for reforming a particular religion also provided the basis for the glorification of particular religious texts or an attack on other religions. Similarly, the need to set right the denigration of India's past typical of colonial historiography often led to uncritical revivalism, which focused on the 'greatness' of ancient India and soon degenerated to the argument that Muslims were foreigners rather than a part of India's composite culture.

- Thus a critical study of India's past, that does not gloss over the oppression and vandalism of rulers or invaders or the reasons for their behaviour, but is also balanced in its assessment, appears crucial in the struggle against the communalisation of society and politics. Such studies would make clear that neither was conflict in the past restricted to that between Hindus and Muslims, nor was it true that Muslim rulers were in general religious militants while Hindu rulers were tolerant. However, it is precisely propaganda of this kind that has been utilised in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. The actual evidence on this particular issue and its implications is discussed both by R.S. Sharma and in the document on the Political Abuse of History issued by the faculty of Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is also carried in this issue.

The theme of historical misrepresentation is also taken up by Athar Ali, in his examination of the evidence relating to the 'intrusion of Islam' into India. That evidence suggests that the Arab conquerors slipped easily into the shoes of the Indian rulers, accepting the

Brahmans in their role as revenue collectors with a share in collection and also guaranteeing their mode of worship and the sanctity of their images. This influenced the perceptions of the vanquished as well, who though seeing the Arabs as alien invaders, also accepted the reduced authority under rulers who offered a life with honour. The subsequent phases of the 'coming of Islam' were also characterised by dualities—both in the attitudes and behaviour of the invaders and the perceptions of the vanquished. But above all, it provided for 'a political uniformity and larger allegiance' and a new cultural efflorescence. Unfortunately, in modern perceptions of the problem, this complex duality is often ignored, leading to the abuse of history as in the Babri-Masjid case.

The other major theme in this issue is the state of the economy, analysed in a background paper by Ashok Mitra presented at a recent meeting of economists on the subject organised by the *Social Scientist* and a statement issued at the end of the meeting. Ashok Mitra focuses on aspects of recent growth trends in the country that give cause for concern, despite the relatively higher rates of growth realised in recent years. To start with, the commendable growth in national income over the 1980s notwithstanding, the performance of the agricultural sector both in terms of overall growth and its regional spread has been disquieting. Much of the recent buoyancy has been in services and to a lesser extent in manufacturing. Further within manufacturing, there have been substantial variations in rates of growth across industries, with a skew in favour of energy intensive consumer goods and import intensive consumer durables, whose growth has been encouraged by the liberalisation of domestic industrial and external trade policy.

With the rate of saving declining over this period characterised by a consumption-led boom, much of this growth has been sustained with external borrowing and high levels of deficit financing. The effects of such a strategy have become visible both in the domestic market, where prices are buoyant, and the external front, where the current account balance as a share of GDP has widened leading to a decline in reserves and a sharp increase in India's foreign debt burden to more than Rs. 100,000 crore by end-March 1989. Referring to these trends, the Statement on The Indian Economy points to the directions in which policy would have to move so as to reorient the process of growth in ways that would correct these imbalances.

R.S. SHARMA\*

## *Communalism and India's Past\*\**

It is difficult to define community and communalism. The community can be formed on the basis of ethnicity, profession, territorial habitation, caste affiliation, and last but not the least on the basis of religious loyalties. When we think of communalism we think of religious communities. In India communalism is particularly seen in the light of the nature of relation between the Hindus and the Muslims, although in recent times the community organised on the basis of Sikh religion is being given an aggressive identity.

Basically religious beliefs, rituals and practices arise and develop in man's continuous struggle to overcome the obstacles presented by nature and equally so in man's struggle against man on social issues. When people find it difficult to explain the difficulties presented by nature rationally they take to miraculous and superstitious explanations. These give rise to a plethora of gods and goddesses as we have in the *Rig Veda* where most divinities represent beneficent or malevolent forces of nature.

Again, when privileged groups or social classes find it difficult to maintain their power and privileges based on an unequal share of the produce made available by peasants, artisans and others, they devise superstitious measures to collect taxes and tributes. Similarly when the mass of the people burdened with disabilities fight for social justice they invoke the aid of the god who is credited with the creation of free and equal human beings. Thus religion is used and elaborated by both the privileged and the underprivileged sections of society but more so by the former because the religious ideology of the privileged classes, as can be shown in the Indian situation, is turned into the dominant ideology which is ingrained in the masses of the people.

Religion played the same role in precapitalist societies in ancient and medieval times as various types of ideology play in capitalist and other societies in modern times. Thus the advent of such religions as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam helped to reform and reorganise society and economy on healthier lines. Social norms introduced by

\* Formerly Professor of History, Delhi University, Delhi.

\*\* Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiyya Memorial Lecture delivered at the XIV Session of the Andhra Pradesh History Congress, Kakatiya University, Warangal, February 1990.

religions inspired people to form better social orders. But it has to be understood that every religion is the product of a certain type of social milieu. Thus the stress of Buddhism on the protection of all beings in general and of the cows in particular helped to promote agriculture at a time when iron tools came to be used in cultivation on a wide scale in the middle Gangetic plains from about 500 BC onwards. But Buddhism did not abolish the varna-based social distinctions that had emerged on account of the unequal distribution of the surplus product among various segments of society. The brahmanical religion took the wind out of the sails of Buddhism by focusing on the idea of the protection of the cow. Cleverly enough it also declared the life of the brahmana as sacrosanct as that of the cow, and this idea was embedded in the minds of the masses along with the idea of *punarjanma* or rebirth. Evidently the tenet of protecting the cow greatly promoted plough-based agriculture and animal husbandry in the tribal areas which were brought under brahmanical influence through conquest and land grants. But now when we have far more advanced methods for advancing agriculture, cattle naturally take a back seat in priorities for protection. The 'sacred cow' theory becomes a fetter on our economic growth. We have to feed either animals which are uneconomic and unproductive or human beings who are engaged in producing activities. This point has been emphasized by several leading economists. Thus we can see the interaction between the needs of the material situation and the force of ideology. But this does not detract from the positive role that Buddhism played in early history.

Similarly Christianity preached the gospel of equality between the slave and master who were placed in the same category in the world of god, although it did nothing to abolish the real social differentiation that existed between the two in the Roman empire. Islam played a progressive role inasmuch as it welded the various Arab clans and tribes into a polity and substantially reduced the perpetual tribal feuds that plagued them. It also preached the tenet of equality between the rich and the poor and insisted that the poor should be supported by the rich by means of charities and taxes. But even Islam could not ignore social reality in the land of its birth and had to allow a maximum of four wives to its adherent. This was certainly better than the clan chiefs having 20 to 30 or more wives. Although Islam was opposed to idol worship it had to acknowledge the sanctity of the Qaba stone which was very well established in pre-Islamic Mucca. Religions therefore cannot be viewed in isolation from the social circumstances in which they originate.

From time to time when the older tenets of religion are found out of tune with the changing social and economic situations, movements are launched to reform religions and make them acceptable to their followers. The Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Brahmo Samaj are important examples in modern times. Of these the Arya Samaj movement seems to be most important. It campaigned against the

disabilities that were imposed on women and shudras who were debarred from vedic studies, and especially on women who were made victims of child marriage and lifelong widowhood. The Arya Samajists did a lot of research and along with other reformists collected a large number of passages from ancient texts, especially from the Vedas, to find support for uplifting the position of women and lower orders in Hindu society. But now the zeal for reforming Hindu society shown by the earlier founders of the Samaj has been allowed to degenerate into anti-Muslim campaigns and what is worse into an obsession that attributes uncritically all the wisdom and achievements of the world to the Vedas. Such propaganda cannot be swallowed by a historian who has to rely on facts and evidence. Unless this kind of vicious propaganda is countered with facts and figures, of which there is no dearth in ancient texts, it will communalise the mind of literate people who in turn would infect the minds of the ordinary masses with the communal virus. Such vicious religious propaganda coupled with other causes led to fanatical wars such as the crusades and those between the catholics and the protestants in medieval times. At present such propaganda poses a danger to the cause of national integration in India.

Under colonial domination, the nationalists of the Asian countries, which were civilised at a time when the colonialist countries were culturally backward, naturally took inspiration from the past. This happened in India, Arab countries, Turkey and elsewhere. Freedom fighters were not deterred by the glaring contrast between the feudal backwardness of their country and the advancing industrial capitalist society of their masters. In order to resist the rule of the colonialists they recalled the country's achievements in the past from which they drew confidence and inspiration. In India and elsewhere this task was performed by historians at some risk. In order to justify their autocratic rule the British historians tried to prove that Indians were incapable of self-government and that they had been accustomed to despotic rule throughout their history. In reply the Indian historians tried to demonstrate the existence of several self-governing institutions at the local and even at the state level. The British historians in particular and western historians in general asserted that many elements of civilization came to India from outside. In response to this Indian nationalist historians tried to prove that their institutions and elements of culture were purely indigenous. There is no doubt that a good deal of good research was done in response to the British denigration of India's past. The nationalist argument with India's past illumined many facets of its history, but it contained strong elements of revivalism.

Some leading historians of ancient India who tried to take a patriotic position included K.P. Jayaswal, H.C. Raichaudhari and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. Jayaswal was the first to provide solid evidence for the existence of republics in ancient India. Similarly

Nilakanta Sastri was the first to underline the importance of the self-governing institutions at the village and district levels under the Cholas and the Pallavas. Such researches certainly gave tongue to those who wanted to refute the tradition of despotic rule attributed to India by the British. But these writers sometimes overstepped the limits of scientific historical reconstruction. Jayaswal concluded his book on Hindu polity by the use of the phrase *janani Janmabhumiścha svargadapi gariyasi*, which means that the mother and the motherland are far more important than even the heaven. He gave a very inspired account of the ancient Indian political institutions. Nilakanta Sastri emphasized the cultural supremacy of the brahmanas, and sometimes considered the Hindus more tolerant than the Muslims, a cliché that has now become so popular with the communalists. Jayaswal, Nilakanta Sastri and others also stressed the alien character of the Shakas and others who came to India in post-Maurya times. R. Gopalachari praises the Satavahanas at having not allowed the Shakas to have obtained a permanent footing on the ground that these were foreigners. It will be seen that this idea of giving the foreign label even to those who settled permanently in India and became an integral part of its social, economic and cultural fabric is now being used by some politicians, and the Muslims are repeatedly called foreigners by Hindu communalists.

A stronger element of Hindu revivalism appears in the writings of R.C. Majumdar (1888–1980), who was a prolific writer and the General Editor of the multi-volume publication on the *History and Culture of the Indian People*. This series was planned in a manner in which more volumes were given to what Majumdar considered to be periods of Hindu domination and less volumes to those of what he considered to be periods of Muslim domination. He was a great protagonist of Greater India. He ignored the indigenous cultures of South-East Asia and highlighted its hinduisation.

It is striking that leading historians from Bengal welcomed the establishment of British rule in eastern India as a blessing. Though the British colonial rule proved oppressive to both the Hindus and the Muslims alike such a great historian as Jadunath Sarkar looked upon it as an act of deliverance. It is most unfortunate that his ideas were accepted and taken to absurd lengths by historians like A.L. Srivastava who attributed the creation of Pakistan to the Arab invasion of Sindh in 712. It is very well known that the Arab invasion of Sindh was a non-starter in the history of India. Though the Arabs disseminated some elements of Indian culture in the West, yet their four-century rule in Sindh did not make any real impact on Indian polity, culture and society.

Since the mind of some of the leading educationists and historians of Bengal worked on communal lines they could not think of an integrated department of history in which all periods and aspects of history could be taught. It was obviously to boost the glories of ancient India that for

the first time a separate department of Ancient Indian History and Culture was set up in the country in Calcutta University. Similarly a department of Islamic history was set up to match the study of Hindu history. It is significant that papers which were recommended for the study of Indian history in Calcutta University were devoted to Rajput history, Maratha history and Sikh history. The obvious idea was to highlight the activities of those communities which fought against the oppressive rule of the Mughals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Accordingly monographs were written on each one of these peoples. On the other hand despite numerous examples of revolt against the British colonial rule in Bengal itself no such courses were framed. It will therefore appear that the idea of regarding Muslims as foreigners, even though they had permanently settled in the country and become a part of its composite culture, was fostered and legitimatised by the organisation of historical studies on communal lines. Calcutta provided the model for historical and other studies in the universities that were set up in Bengal, Bihar, Assam and other adjacent areas. Once a department of Ancient Indian History and Culture was set up in Calcutta in course of time it was established in Banaras and other universities. There is no doubt that individual members of these departments have done valuable research work. But at the same time many of them turned out to be bastions of obscurantism and Hindu communalism and they tried to emphasize the antiquity and the uniqueness of all that happened in ancient India and tried to prove implicitly that Hinduism was intrinsically superior to Islam and other religions.

In the present situation revivalist ideas are being used and bolstered by a few communal-minded writers. It is asserted that all that has been good and great in the world in the past originated in India and spread from here to the other parts of the world. But historians who have to base themselves on solid evidence cannot subscribe to such views. Whether it is the use of various types of metals and coins or whether it is the use of writing and similar elements of civilisation we have to examine the evidence carefully. It will be seen that all ultra revivalist views are put forward by such historians as are committed to Hindu communalist and Islamic fundamentalist ideas.

The communal problem in India is basically seen as the problem of relation between the Hindus and the Muslims. This problem cannot be solved by glossing over the acts of vandalism and oppression perpetuated by the rulers professing one religion over the rulers and ruled professing another religion. In history it has been a privilege of the ruling classes, whatever might be their religion, to plunder and oppress their subjects and their enemies and to distribute the booty, preferably among the members of the upper sections of the ruling class. If the Islamic chiefs and princes plundered the Hindu temples, historians cannot generate goodwill by ignoring this fact. But the causes of such plunders have to be explained, as has been done in the

case of the plunders of Mahmud of Ghazni by Mohammad Habib. Even a lay man could see that although all Hindu temples may not have been as rich as those of Somnath and Tirupati, in general the temples were relatively far more wealthier than the mosques. In the early eleventh century the Somnath temple had 500 devadasis, 300 barbers and numerous priests. It was endowed with as many as 10,000 villages. The very architecture of the mosque leaves no room for storage of wealth. It is an open structure meant for prayer. It is because of the accumulation of wealth in the temples that some Hindu rulers appointed special officers for destroying the idols made of precious metals and seizing wealth for the treasury. Such was the case with Harsha who ruled in Kashmir in the end of the eleventh century, and had appointed an officer whose function was concerned with that of uprooting the idols (*devotpatana*). The appointment of such officers and the measures recommended in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya to raise money from the credulous people by superstitious devices will dispel the idea that members of the Hindu ruling class have been consistently tolerant towards their subjects.

Certainly there is much to emulate and admire in what Ashoka did, but his policy hit the pocket of brahmanas. Pushyamitra Shunga, who put an end to the remnants of the Maurya power and set up a brahmana dynasty, announced that whoever would bring him the head of a Buddhist monk would get a reward of 100 gold coins for it. This may have been an exaggeration because Buddhist stupas were also built during the Shunga rule, but the antagonism between the Pushyamitra Shunga and the monks cannot be denied. We also learn that Shashanka, a Shaivite ruler of Gauda in West Bengal, cut out the Bodhi *peepal* tree under which Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment. In the seventh century his contemporary Harsha is considered to be a tolerant ruler, but he jailed and executed brahmanas who were charged with the conspiracy of having burned the tower that had been raised in honour of the Buddha in the assembly at Kannauj. In early medieval times in south India we hear of open hostilities between the Jainas and the Shaivites, and according to tradition as many as 8,000 Jainas were impaled at the stake. More instances of this type can be multiplied to show that when it involved power and self the members of the Hindu ruling class proved to be as ferocious as those of the Muslim ruling class. On the other hand there are also numerous instances of tolerance on the part of both the Hindu rulers and Muslim rulers, not to speak of the ordinary masses of both the communities. Therefore it would be wrong to paint the Muslim rulers as cruel and the Hindu rulers as kind and tolerant. But unfortunately such images are being built by Hindu communalists and Muslim fundamentalists try to catch up with them. An important instance of communal propaganda is found in the 30 murals depicted on the walls of the Babari Masjid in which an idol of Rama has been instituted after the judgment of a district court in 1987. One of the murals represents soldiers of Babar



destroying the fictitious temple of Rama and slaughtering the Hindus. This mural is introduced by a written label which states that the soldiers of Babar killed 75,000 Hindus in the course of their attack on the temple of Rama at Ayodhya and built Babari Masjid with their blood which served as mortar. Such an inflammable falsehood has been flashed to fan communal feelings. This propaganda is as false as the view that the temple of Rama was demolished by Babar and the Babari Masjid was built in its place by him.

R.C. Sinha, a former Director of Archaeology Department of Uttar Pradesh, explored as many as 17 sites in Ayodhya and also excavated two sites. According to him at most places signs of habitation at Ayodhya are not earlier than the second century BC, only at two places they could be attributed to Maurya times. B.B. Lal, a former Director General of Archaeology, Government of India, excavated at Ayodhya for three seasons and this excavation shows that Ayodhya was not settled on any scale until the seventh century BC. This finding is true of most sites excavated in the alluvial soil of the middle Gangetic zone. Those who believe in the historicity of Rama fix his date around 2000 BC. This is done on the basis that *Ramu* Dasharathi lived nearly 65 generations before the time of the Bharata war. It is generally accepted that the Bharata War took place around 1000 BC. We therefore face a gap of more than 1000 years between the settlement of Ayodhya on any scale and the age of Rama in Ayodhya. It is because of this difficulty that some scholars try to locate Ayodhya in Afghanistan.

Ayodhya seems to have emerged as a place of religious pilgrimage in medieval times, though it is mentioned in the *Vishnu Smriti* of about the third century AD as a religious place. At present there is no evidence of the temple of Rama in any part of Uttar Pradesh until the sixteenth century. We have a large number of *tirthas* or places of pilgrimage whose merits are extolled in the *tirtha* sections of the Puranas. But the *tirtha-mahatmya* section appears in the Puranas from the sixth century onwards. These *tirthas* really were set up on the ruins of ancient towns which were once centres of crafts, commerce and other urban activities. When urbanism declined the *tirthas* were instituted to preserve the ancient memories of the towns. In any case it is clear that Ayodhya has not been a *tirtha* of very long standing; from the Hindu point of view many more *tirthas* are far more important than that of Ayodhya in northern India. This seems to have been the case with Prayag and Banaras. Tulsidas who wrote *Ramacharitamanasa* at Ayodhya does not mention Avadhapuri as a place of pilgrimage. In a verse (*chaupai*) he states that he wrote the manuscript at *Avadhapuri*, which could have been easily changed into *Avadhatirtha* without doing any damage to the metrical arrangement. In the *Ramacharitamanasa* of Tulsidas Ayodhya neither appears as a place with a temple of Rama nor as a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus. On the other hand Prayag is called the king of all the places

of pilgrimage, i.e., *tirath-raj*. As far as I know there is not a shred of historical evidence to support the view of those who assert that a temple of Rama was built in Ayodhya in the eleventh-twelfth centuries.

Some Shaiva temples may have existed in Ayodhya, and the few pillars used in the construction of the Babari Masjid may have belonged to one of those temples. The use of the older material in the construction of mosques is noticeable elsewhere also, for example, in the structures near Kutub Minar. But those who have some idea of the archaeological sequence in structures in ancient India could cite many instances of the material from earlier buildings being used in the construction of the later ones. Excavations show that numerous Kushan bricks were used in Gupta structures. In fact this is a widespread practice in different periods not only in India but also in other countries. However in the case of the Babari Masjid there is nothing to show that a Rama temple was demolished and a mosque was raised in its place. Muslim population in Ayodhya and Faizabad areas appeared around the fourteenth century, and there was every reason for building a mosque. Reference to the construction of such a mosque is not found in the *Babarnama*, i.e. *Memoirs of Babar*. It occurs in an appendix inserted by Mrs. Beveridge, who translated Babar's autobiography from Turkish into English. She refers to an inscription according to which a mosque was built by Mir Baqui at the command of Babar. The identity of Mir Baqui is not known from any source, and the inscription does not refer to any temple whatsoever. Therefore the conjecture that a Rama temple was demolished is absolutely without any foundation. There is no proof at all of Babar going to Ayodhya. On the other hand he visited Gwalior, and he speaks in rapturous terms of the architecture of both its secular and religious buildings. These include a mosque built by Illutmish; otherwise all the other pieces of structure are Hindu. Babar speaks of idols and idol houses, i.e., temples of Gwalior including Chanderi admiringly. It is an irony that a lover of Hindu art and architecture should be credited with the destruction of a temple, which, in any case, did not exist. It is therefore very clear that the Babari mosque was not built by demolishing a temple of Rama at Ayodhya. But even if a few religious structures of this type were raised elsewhere, it will be suicidal to adopt a policy of their deliberate destruction; this is not certainly warranted by the best traditions of Hinduism.

In this medieval period Mathura emerged as a far more important place of pilgrimage than Ayodhya. But its religious sanctity shot up only after its decline as an urban centre around the fourth century AD or so. Significantly in the numerous inscriptions that are found in Mathura between 200 BC and 300 AD there is no specific mention of Lord Krishna, who emerges later as the chief divinity in Mathura. The name Vasudeva is adopted by members of the Kushan dynasty, but they never adopt Krishna which name occurs in a Satavahana inscription of

the end of the first century BC. Similarly we have numerous pieces of sculpture from Mathura belonging to 200 BC and 300 AD and preserved in Mathura Museum and elsewhere, but no piece can be specifically identified as that representing Krishna. On the other hand numerous pieces represent Jain, Buddhist and various brahmanical divinities. Clearly the mythology of Krishna was developed much later in early medieval times when it found representation in art.

Recently because of underwater excavations in the coastal area of Gujarat the antiquity of Dwaraka has been pushed back to about the middle of the third millennium BC. But this does not automatically push back Krishna's association with Dwaraka to the same period. We have neither any epigraphic nor sculptural evidence to support this view. Competent ancient historians in general place the date of the Mahabharata War around 1000 BC, and even if the historicity of Krishna is accepted he can be placed around that time. But motivated by religious fanaticism some scholars go on predating events without any rhyme or reason. Astronomical tables fabricated in the early centuries of the Christian era are used to fix dates of mythological events. These are taken back to fourth and fifth millennium BC and even much earlier when we do not have archaeological evidence for the use of metal or the practice of plough agriculture in our country. However the cult of Krishna appeared earlier than that of Rama, and Rama's cult really gained in importance in late medieval times.

Generally the historians who deal with modern history are not swayed by communal considerations. Even those who deal with medieval history do not seem to be very communal. But some of those who deal with ancient Indian history identify themselves almost completely with chauvinistic and communal elements and try to defend the indefensible on grounds of blind faith. Despite the striking contrast between the pastoral life of the *Rig Veda* and the urban life of the Harappans they insist that the Harappa culture was created by the Vedic people. They stress that the Harappan script is alphabetical and that it represents examples of proto-Sanskrit. Similarly they ignore the similarities between the Bronze Age urban civilisation of Harappa and those of western Asia and Crete and gloss over its efflorescence in Sindh and Punjab. They assert that this civilisation and culture really originated and flourished in the Saraswati valley for which there is no evidence whatsoever. The Saraswati bed shows remnants of pre-Harappan elements which may have contributed to the making of the Harappan culture in some ways, but the mature Harappan culture is a distinct phenomenon, and Harappa and Mohenjodaro in Pakistan still continue to be its best examples. Evidently all such assertions are made by some Indian archaeologists because the centre of the mature Harappan culture lies in Pakistan.

We should not rule out genuine difference in approach and opinion, but by and large revivalist exercises are undertaken to serve the communal cause. They are meant to meet the demands of those whose

vision of the future lies in the past. In order to sell the past to the present generation it is painted in attractive but false colours. As a consequence enormous damage is being done to the understanding of Indian culture and, more importantly, to the unity and integrity of the country. The past is misread to vitiate the relations between the various communities that inhabit the country. Only patient and sustained efforts of right thinking writers, researchers and educators can effectively counter the communalist attempt to drive the past as a wedge and to divide the people into warring camps,

M. ATHAR ALI\*

*Encounter and Efflorescence:  
Genesis of the Medieval Civilization\*\**

There is today much introspection, and groping towards conflicting 'identities'. History (often, unhappily, appearing only as garb of part-mythology and part-fiction) has become a court of appeal for all the rival interests. It is time, therefore, that we interpret, as objectively and critically as possible, our past heritage; and as a modest contribution to this effort, I should like to offer to you my own understanding of that long and fateful encounter between two civilizations which took place in medieval times, and which I believe to have not only been fateful but immensely creative.

At first sight it may look odd why any one should choose to write on a theme which would now seem to be well-worn, viz, 'the intrusion of Islam' in Indian history. My own excuse for doing so is a two-fold one. First, the debate on the question, far from being closed, has intensified, and it is not likely to go away, even if the present phase of its violent expression would hopefully pass, being perhaps only one of those periodical bouts in which we have learnt, by our action, to belittle the greatness of our own civilization. Secondly, it has seemed to me that much of the previous writing, despite the extensive research and scientific outlook on which so much of it was based, did not fully take into account the perceptions of Islamic history, generated by modern research, but rather took either the old-fashioned missionary or the apologist's view of Islam for its basis.

This is unfortunate. Wellhausen in his *Arab Kingdom and its Fall* had, for example, long ago shattered the stereotype picture of Arabs appearing with a sword in one hand and the Quran in another, and asking every one to stand up and be converted. For Indian scholars there was little excuse to have waited. We had in the *Chachanama*, the 13th-century Persian translation of a practically contemporary set of narratives of the Arab conquest of Sind, an authentic detailed account of the process of the Arab conquest (710-14) and its aftermath. Here we see the Arab conquerors easily slipping into the shoes of Indian rulers. The *Chachnama* tells us how the Brahmans were continued as revenue-collectors, how their mode of worship and sanctity of images was

---

\* Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

\*\* Presidential Address to Indian History Congress, Gorakhpur, 1989.

guaranteed, including the right of the priests to a share in tax-collection, and how the lowly Jatts continued to be subjected to the same humiliating restrictions that remind us of the Manusmitriti's injunctions against the *Chandalas*.<sup>1</sup> On the last point, we have an independent confirmation from Balazuri.<sup>2</sup> The same tolerance of the established religion extended to the Buddhists: they continued to make votive offerings of Arab coins at the great Stupa of Mir Pur Khas.<sup>3</sup> Epigraphy attests to a similar attitude on the part of the Arab rulers in an area further northward. In 857-8 in the Tochi Valley, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), an Arab Governor Fayy ibn 'Ammar constructed a pond, and then had a bilingual inscription set up, in Arabic (Kufic) and Sanskrit (Sharda), the latter duly beginning with 'Om'.<sup>4</sup>

These actions belie the picture of the Arab conquerors as uncouth, avaricious barbarian nomads coming out of the desert, fired with a fanatical belief that God was on their side. The picture is by no means a modern one. In the 11th century Firdausi put the following words of indignant portrayal of the Arab Victor in the mouth of the vanquished Persian Aristocrat :

From living on camel's milk and lizard's flesh  
The Arabs have suddenly reached a State  
That they have set their sights on the throne of the Emperors,  
Fie be upon thee, the ever altering fortune<sup>5</sup>

But the picture, though early, is overdrawn, even for the Arabs who overthrew the Persians in the 630s. The over-drawing was aided by the Muslims' own tendency to stress the pagan Arabs' barbarous ways in order to highlight the change wrought by Islam. Recent research has tended to discount much of this, and to suggest, by an interpretation of the word *ummi*, that the Prophet himself was not unlettered but only a 'gentile', in the Jewish and Christian meaning of the term, and that, even the early Arabs obtained leadership and organization from the mercantile and sophisticated Quraish.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the seventh century, the situation was different. The Bedouin element in the conquering Arabs had been suppressed through a series of bloody civil wars, by the Umayyads—the cream of the Quraish—relying upon the Syrians, the most Hellenised of the Arabs. (We must remember that it was through Syriac that Arabic was to receive the wealth of Greek science and learning under the Abbasids).

By the time the Arabs invaded Sind, other civilized elements had entered the scene, the non-Arab Muslims, largely from Iran, called the *mawali*. Their existence was essential to the Arab regime, yet their pretensions had to be severely suppressed in the interest of the Arab ruling class.<sup>7</sup> The elite position of the Syrians and the contempt for *mawali*, are duly attested by the *Chachnama*.<sup>8</sup> It is this hierarchical structure pre-existing among the Arab conquerors, which explains their readiness immediately to accommodate the existing hierarchy in Sind.

They had already achieved an accommodation with the *dihqans*, or the rural aristocracy of the Sassanian regime in Iran; to accept Brahmans and possibly *Thakkuras* 'takurs',<sup>9</sup> as subordinate ruling class was thus in conformity with their tradition. Their scorn for the *mawali* moderated their zeal to create a large population of converts in Sind : the *Chachnama* thus records not a single forcible conversion to Islam.

If this was the attitude of the conquerors, how were they looked at by the vanquished? The only source for this is the *Chachnama*. It is by no means an unreliable source. The presence of an entire local chronicle for the history of the pre-Arab dynasty—reminding us of the later, celebrated *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana and of constant reports from the Indian side on the war, including much hero-worship of Dahar's son Jaisiya, shows that it can claim some authenticity as conveyor of the Indian sentiments. It represents Dahar's sister preparing for self-immolation to escape from captivity under those 'cow-eating Chandalas'.<sup>10</sup> But, after the settlement at Brahmanabad, the Brahman officials are said to have dispersed over the country and to have thus addressed the 'notables' everywhere:

Dahar is dead; the power of the 'infidels' has come to an end. In the whole of Sind and Hind, the writ of the Arabs has been established. The big and small of this territory, from town and village, has become one (under subjection), and our affairs are to be held to be managed under a great Empire. We have been sent by them to give you good assurances.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the response was of a dual kind. In the first instance, a bitter rejection of an alien invader: in the second, a realistic acceptance of conditions in which the invader became familiar and life with honour, though with reduced authority, undoubtedly, was possible. The question one tends to ask is whether the response could have been very greatly different if the invader had not been the Arabs, but, say, another North Indian power. Certainly, when King Harsha of Kashmir was overthrown by an internal revolt (1101 AD), the scene of fiery immolation of the queens and women of the royal family<sup>12</sup> was no different from that described by the *Chachnama* in respect of Dahar's family faced with seizure by the Arabs.<sup>13</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Arabs were foreigners in that they represented a visibly different cultural tradition. But our present understanding that 'foreign' invasions have been detrimental to a country, derives from a natural, but illogical, confusion between pre-modern 'foreign' (a concept again based on modern national boundaries) and modern colonial acquisitions. There is in all advanced historiographies a much more critical attitude towards the role played by conquerors from different cultural areas. V. Barthold, the Soviet historian, had strongly opposed the negative assessment of the Mongol conquests pronounced by his Russian colleagues. It is thus equally important that we should not try to read back our present-national sentiments into those of the

people of a millennium earlier, and feel awkward if they do not appear to have been shared.

Conformable to this view, one tends to forget that during the subsequent centuries too Sind remains part of Indian history. This ought not to be forgotten if for the single reason that during this period it represented a strong contrast to the conditions of 'Indian Feudalism'. The ruins of the large city of Mansura (encompassing Brahmanabad and Mahfuza) that the Arabs built, extended in a band about two-and-a-half miles long and a half to three-fourth of a mile wide, exhibiting dense occupations with 'thousands' of wells.<sup>14</sup> Nor is the coinage issued by the Arab rulers of Sind to be despised for its size: the copper coins recovered are numerous, and the silver, though small and relatively 'rare',<sup>15</sup> suggest commerce on a considerable scale. One would respectfully take issue with Professor R.S. Sharma, who holds that the Arab conquests adversely affected India's external commerce during the first two or three centuries of Islam.<sup>16</sup> The statement is perhaps based on Henry Pierrenne's famous hypothesis of the genesis of feudalism out of the blocking of Mediterranean commerce through the Islamic presence,<sup>17</sup> but this argument was contested long ago by W.C. Dennett and others, and has now been practically abandoned.<sup>18</sup> Conditions were, on the other hand, quite the opposite. Spain in Arab hands was thriving region of commerce with the Western Empire, as Marc Block notes.<sup>19</sup> Arab-held Sind might well have played a similar role in 'feudal' India.

## II

Textbook writers often refer to the 'coming' of Islam into India as the work of three principal figures, Mohammad ibn Qasim (d. 714), Mahmud of Ghaznin (d. 1030) and Shihabuddin of Ghor (d. 1206). This leaves out of account the fact that there had occurred considerable changes in the Islamic world in the three centuries that separated the Arab conqueror of Sind from the Ghaznavide empire-builder, and that the nature of interests and ambitions of the two were widely different.

What happened during the three intervening centuries was the flowering in the Islamic and African worlds, of a single great civilization, and the construction, side by side, of the brutal institutions of despotic politics. Under the Great Abbassids (8th and 9th centuries). Greek philosophy and science found a home in Arabic, through one of the greatest processes of translations made in pre-modern history; and it became a starting point of an intellectual renaissance. Islam was given its classic shape, with Asharite theology and the great school of jurisprudence. There came a deep new probing into the motives of conformist ethics, and this was to lead to Islamic mysticism or *tasawwuf*, the refuge of souls unimpressed by orthodoxy. By the 11th century the Iranian revival had begun in the eastern portion of this world, making its own contribution to the growth of a sceptical spirit.



Along with these developments in the higher culture, new political institutions evolved, as the Caliphate waxed and waned. The claim to the entire agrarian surplus as royal tax (*kharaj*), the transferable tax-assignment (*iqta*), the slave-soldiers and officers (largely Turkish) gave enormous strength to the centralized regional states, which now arose, their rulers ultimately to claim the old Arabic title of Sultan. The power of the new states lay not only in these fiscal and administrative instruments: the new techniques of war made the Arab infantryman and camel-rider obsolete and brought in the mounted archer, his horse provided, besides saddle, with stirrup and iron-shoe.<sup>20</sup>

The success of Mahmud of Ghazni were undoubtedly due not only to his military genius, but also to the institutions of centralized despotism and the military system that had been steadily built up. He only put them skilfully to use for his own self-aggrandisement.

To minds truly nurtured in the civilization that had been created in the world of Islam, Mahmud could call for little sympathy. Sa'di (13th century) saw him as an avaricious man jealous that his empire should pass after his death to another, and contrasted him with Naushervan, whose name would be gratefully remembered for ever because of his pursuit of justice.<sup>21</sup> Alberuni, the great scientist and contemporary of Mahmud, did not conceal his true sympathies when he wrote:

Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country (India), and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

It was only the fanatically inclined who would interpret Mahmud's exploits as contributing to the glory of Islam, and for reasons which would be hardly edifying for any religion. Isami (writing, 1350) was to say in verse :

If I and you, O wise one, find a place in this realm,  
Some time to convert a temple into mosque, or break sacred threads,  
Or make the women and children of Hindus into concubines and slaves—  
All of this is due to the legacy of his (Mahmud's) work. This is the truth, all else is mere talk.<sup>23</sup>

Glorification in vulgar terms like this has given Mahmud the image of an 'arch-fanatic he never was.' Professor Mohammad Habib was right to argue that Islam won infamy in India, not only from the original depredations of Mahmud, but also from admiration 'by such Mussalmans as have cast off the teachings of Lord Krishna in their devotion to minor gods.'<sup>24</sup>

But it is equally right to look at some other evidence as well: Was Mahmud so vastly different from other conquerors and marauders as to leave in India an everlasting bitter memory. It does appear strange as we seek such evidence that he should not be mentioned in any Sanskrit source, except for one, Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*. In that single Sanskrit account of one of Mahmud's invasions—a campaign against Trilochanpala, we are told of the defeat of the combined armies of the Shahi and Kashmir rulers, attributed by Kalhana to the Kashmir general Tunga's lack of acquaintance with 'Turushka Warfare'. Kalhana sincerely mourns the fall of the Shahi Kingdom, which the impetuosity and then the temerity of the Kashmir general brought about in face of Hammira, (Amir Mahmud), 'skilled in strategem'. But there is no particular denunciation of the 'fierce chandalas', the Turushkas, who descended 'on the whole surface of the earth'.<sup>24</sup> There is no reference to any plunder, enslavement, desecration of temples, flight of Brahmins to Kashmir, which one might naturally have expected Kalhana to dilate upon if only to stress the baneful consequences of Tunga's ineptitude. It is, seemingly, just one of the episodes in political history, a conquest like any other. One begins to wonder whether the sensitive Alberuni and the vainglorious chroniclers have not presented a picture of Mahmud's depredations that is heavily overdrawn. Nor should Mahmud be allowed to overshadow Alberuni. The compilation of Alberuni's *Kitabul-i Hind*<sup>25</sup> was a unique event in the history of mankind, unique because there has been no other instance in pre-modern times, of one of the greatest intellectuals of one civilization studying and analysing, with such range and depth, the major aspects of another civilization. In words borrowed from reviews of Needham's great work on China, it was at once an 'act of recognition' and a great act of 'intercultural communication'. We are here introduced to a rigorously scientific spirit, a detailed, balanced, scrutiny of Sanskrit materials, a close knowledge of Greek philosophy and science, which the author calls upon to assess the level of Indian cultural and intellectual development, and a turly critical approach as well to the ideas and institutions of his own Islamic milieu. Sachau wonders how Alberuni, under the shadow of Mahmud could speak of Hindu scholars 'who enjoy the help of God'.<sup>26</sup> He was ready to seek reason behind many of the myths and rituals that he examined with such care, just as he could condemn with straightforward frankness the inanities or concealments that he found in his texts. It was surely a seminal moment when Alberuni conveyed to his readers the view, tentatively nurtured in India, that 'the earth moves while the sun is resting'.<sup>27</sup>

Surely, Alberuni's immense achievement is not only a tribute to his own genius; it is equally a tribute to the civilization which produced him and which provided readers for his great work. There was a duality in Islamic civilization—as in any other—greatness rubbing shoulders with pettiness, an Alberuni by the side of Mahmud; but it would be unhistorical, when assessing the consequences of that civilization's

arrival in India, absolutely to forget one side of it and only remember the other.

### III.

The bilingual coinage of Muizzuddin bin Sam of Ghor (the Shihabuddin Ghorī of our text-books) proclaimed the establishment of what was to become essentially an Indian Sultanate. The coinage is not only bilingual. In two gold coins, it carried the figure of a seated Lakshmi—a concession to Hindu sentiments so unique that Brown pronounces it 'without a parallel in Muhammadan history'.<sup>28</sup> In other gold and silver coins the figure of horseman is provided, as also of Shiva's bull, without any thought of Islamic reserve about representation of living beings.<sup>29</sup> When Iltutmish created the silver *tanka* of 168 grains or so, he did not import 'Islamic' metrology, but clearly tried to base his coin on the *tola*-weight. The billion coins of Iltutmish and his successors continued to be bilingual and carry the horseman and the bull, down to Muizzuddin Kaiqubad (d. 1290).

The coinage suggests a polity which was not alien, lily-white. Originally planted by invasions, it was seeking to spread roots into the soil. How far and fast they had spread is divulged by a chance exclamation of that scrupulous chronicler, Minhaj Siraj. When in 1255 Uzbek Tughril Khan declared himself King and marched from Bengal to Awadh, in rebellion against Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud, 'this act of defiance of his was disapproved by all the people of Hindustan, the divines and the nobles, Muslims and Hindus'.<sup>30</sup> By 1260, when Minhaj Siraj was writing, it was already politically important what Hindus, and not just a section of Muslims (the 'divines and the nobles'), thought of the claims of a pretender.

In the next century, the Sultanate was to embark on an experiment that can have only very few parallels in the pre-modern world, though it was to be repeated in the Mughal Empire on a still bolder scale: the creation of a ruling class not confined to followers of a single religion. Thakkura Pheru, who has left valuable information on coinage and other economic and cultural matters in Sanskrit tracts, was an officer of Alauddin Khalji's mint.<sup>31</sup> Another important Hindu officer of the treasury under the same Sultan (1296–1316), Sadharana by name, makes his appearance in the Ladnun Sanskrit inscription.<sup>32</sup> Their number and influence increased under Muhammad Tughluq: We hear of Ratan, the governor of Siwistan (Sind);<sup>33</sup> Bharan or Sharan, the governor of Gulbarga;<sup>34</sup> and Kishan, 'the market-man of Indri' governor of Awadh.<sup>35</sup> The general statement that Hindus were given high offices by that Sultan occurs in Isami.<sup>36</sup>

Other sections of Hindus not in official employment also obtained a position of protection and prosperity. Such were the merchants especially the Multanis. Already in the 13th century, they were large scale creditors to the Sultanate nobility and greatly benefited from this relationship.<sup>37</sup> Jalaluddin Khalji (1290–96) is said to have commented on

their prosperity and pretensions.<sup>38</sup> And, apart from the nobility, they were said to have been the people who retained their wealth under Alauddin Khalji.<sup>39</sup> They were wealthy enough to have left step-wells, with classical Sanskrit inscriptions praising the Sultans in the same way as a Kshatriya ruler would be praised in any *prasasti*.<sup>40</sup> They would go accompanied by Brahmans, to welcome Sultan Firuz upon his successful bid for the throne,<sup>41</sup> and acquire 'lakhs and crores' under that sovereign.<sup>42</sup> Moreland long ago clarified that there is no basis for identifying Hindus wholesale with the village aristocracy (*muqaddams*, *khots* etc.), whom Alauddin Khalji tried to contain and impoverish.<sup>43</sup> In any case, not only does Barani say that when Firuz Tughluq ascended the throne in 1351, 'the Muslims and Hindus had their hearts comforted',<sup>44</sup> but notes that by 1357 the *khuts*, and *muqaddams* had become prosperous, with numberless horses and cattle.<sup>45</sup>

This evidence of accommodation of Hindus in the political and economic framework of the Sultanate had its counterpart in the official recognition (however limited in terms of the secularist absolutes of today) of the co-existence of the two religions. One may begin by recalling that the extensive reconstruction of the Mahabodhi temple of Buddha Gaya, under Arakanese auspices, took place in 1305-6, during the reign of the Sultans.<sup>46</sup> A spirit of accommodation and even identification is apparent in the famous poet Amir Khusrau's *Nuh Sipihir* (1318), a long panegyric on Qutbuddin in Mubarak Khalji (1316-20). Not only is India superior to other countries, the Hindus are superior to many others in their religious beliefs, language, learning and science.<sup>47</sup> This spirit was obviously shared by Muhammad Tughluq when during a famine he shifted his capital from Delhi to a new settlement on the Ganga, and gave his new seat the Sanskrit name *Swarga-duari*, 'Gate of Heaven'.<sup>48</sup> He would play *holi*, and converse with *yogis*.<sup>49</sup> There is documentary proof too of his solicitude for the Jains: Two religious leaders of the community were to be allowed to go wherever they wished, and be rewarded and honoured.<sup>50</sup> Under Muhammad Tughluq's successor Firuz, well known for his espousal of orthodox views, a sun-temple was built at Gaya in 1352, its Sanskrit inscription containing the Sultan's name twice.<sup>51</sup>

A similar attitude was adopted by Hindu rulers. A Sanskrit inscription at Verawal, Gujarat, of 1246, tells us of the erection of a mosque there by Nuruddin Firuz of Hormuz, under the patronage of Chaulukya King Arjunadeva, said to be powerful through the grace of 'Siva'.<sup>52</sup> Some two hundred years later, when Rana Kumbha built his famous victory tower, he had the word 'Allah' in Arabic recorded nine times on the third storey and eight times on the eighth storey, on pillarettes in excellent workmanship. This led the English observer (1883-4) to say:

This discovery opens up a problem of which the only solution which presents itself to me is that the barrier dividing the

Hindus and Musalmans three (*rect.* four) centuries ago, was far less impassable than it is at the present day.<sup>53</sup>

#### IV

The rulers' indulgence to the 'other' religion could not, indeed, have existed had the barrier between Hindus and Muslims among the people been as impassable as Garrick thought it was in his time. The evidence on what relations between Hindus and Muslims in everyday life were like, is not large, but it is fairly clear.

I shall first offer what the dated conversations of the mystic Shaikh Nizamuddin of Delhi, recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi, in the first two decades of the 14th century, provide to us. In assessing their evidence, it should be noted that the view that the *sufis* or *deroveshes* were liberal men with little care for orthodoxy, is simplistic. They accepted the *shariat* or Muslim law, in its entirety; theirs, as Professor Mohammad Habib once remarked, was a 'post-graduate creed'. Shaikh Nizamuddin himself was sufficiently orthodox to find fault with Abu Hanifa, the founder of the juridical school of Muslim Law prevalent in the larger part of the eastern world of Islam, for saying that on the Last Day, the unbelievers too would see the Light and be pardoned. This could never be, said Nizamuddin, with an assured knowledge of Divine intensions, of which only the most religious and the most orthodox are capable.<sup>54</sup> Yet, he tells us of his own friendly conversations with *yogis* (*jogis*), and treats their beliefs and principles with much respect. At one meeting at his preceptor's seat at Ajodhan, a *yogi* told him that in man's body the navel marks the division of two spheres, the higher concerned with spiritual matters and truth, the other, the lower, concerned with good morals. The Shaikh commended this.<sup>55</sup> Or, again, he tells of obtaining from a *yogi* what qualities offspring conceived on different days would have.<sup>56</sup>

Even more telling is Nizamuddin's assertion that the actual ethics or Muslims being what they were, a Hindu could not be asked to convert to Islam. He said this when a Muslim disciple had brought his Hindu brother to Nizamuddin in the hope of attaining his conversion.<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere Nizamuddin contrasts the upright business ethics of the Hindus of Gujarat with the lack of integrity of the Muslim merchants of Lahore.<sup>58</sup> He commended the compiler Amir Hasan's action in restoring a slave girl to her Hindu parents, although this meant that she would apostatise.<sup>59</sup> 'The theologians concerned with matters of appearance would condemn such action, but one must understand what he did', said Nizamuddin of a similar freeing of a slave maid-servant by a mystic to enable her to return to her Hindu sons in Katehr.<sup>60</sup>

If these were ethical values being established, in spite of the narrow letter of the law, this was surely on account of an increasing appreciation of the vast learning and wisdom of Hinduism (even, if seen only by encounters with *yogis*) and a recognition of the ethical stature of the

Hindus—early products of living side by side with them in towns and villages.

I am not aware of any text in which appraisals from a Hindu divine of this period can be obtained. The late Dev Raj Chanana wrote an interesting essay on the Sanskritist and Indian society. In this he argued that the Sanskritists were prone to sing loyally of whomever had power, and that the *prasasi*-like compositions in which the Muslim rulers appear in the same guise as the Kshatriya rulers were not an expression of a 'communal fraternity of an intellectual kind', as J.B. Chaudhuri had thought, but purely a practise of an old tradition of opportunism.<sup>61</sup> I believe Chanana went a little too far in arguing a partly legitimate case. A poet or writer, whether Amir Khusrau, the court poet, or Pandita Yogiswara, the composer of the Palam Baoli inscription, would equally be ready to serve their patrons and write what they wished them to, whether the patron was the Sultan in one case, or a merchant in another. The question thus passes on to why the patron should have wished the Sanskritists to write as they did. It is difficult to believe that the Hindu merchants who got the laudatory verses for Muslim rulers inscribed on their step-wells at Palam or Sarban were under any pressure to do so; it is unlikely that officials would have read the Sanskrit inscriptions to find out whether the Sultan had been sufficiently praised. What is more likely is that the Sultans fitted into an existing tradition of lauding contemporary rulers; and Muslims had become so familiar in everyday life that they and their faith no longer seemed alien. Thus Balban could be praised for doing all of Vishnu's work for the god, and Muhammad Tughluq could be described as the 'crest-jewel of all rulers of the earth' under whom at Delhi 'sin is expelled through the chanting of the Vedas'.<sup>62</sup> No contradiction was discerned in Vishnu leaving his work to a Muslim ruler, or the Vedic hymns purging a Muslim capital.

How was a Muslim loyal to his faith looked at? An unclean *malechha*, exciting bitter hatred, as Professor R.C. Majumdar would like us to believe?<sup>63</sup> Majumdar cites no authority for his assumption of Hindu urge to exterminate 'the *malechhas* (Muslims)' altogether in India. But one can cite a contrary view. Nanak (fl. 1500) was a Khatri, born a Hindu. His concept of an ideal Muslim, in an oft-quoted verse, is as follows:

Let him heartily obey the will of God,  
Worship the Creator, and efface himself—  
When he is kind to all men, then, Nanak,  
Shall he be indeed a Musalman.<sup>64</sup>

This was not the image of a fierce, fanatical religion, but of one held to preach ethics and benevolence. How far the image was accurate is not relevant; its existence in the mind of men like Nanak is the essential fact.

## V

The 'intrusion of Islam' in Indian history, in its first three centuries (13th to 15th) helped to create political structures, based on the *iqta* (transferable territorial assignment). This allowed the creation, even for half a century, of the first all-India empire after nearly fifteen hundred years, the only preceding one being that of the Mauryas. It clearly reinforced the concept of India as a country, if not a nation. The Palam Baoli inscription of 1281 already gives a geographical description of India, the whole of which it inaccurately claims for Balban.<sup>65</sup> When less than forty years later the claim became a fact, Amir Khusrau proudly claims for India, a primary position in all aspects of nature and culture. He gives us a description of the languages of the different regions of the country but reminds us that Hindawi is the country's *lingua franca*, and Sanskrit its classical language.<sup>66</sup> Khusrau knows India as 'Hind'. In 1350, Isami could write a glowing ode to Hindustan, the name that was to become so common:

Great is the prosperity of the country of Hindustan.  
Heaven itself is jealous of this garden.  
Its territories are an ornament to the face of the Earth.  
As a beauty spot on the face of a lovely maiden.

And so he goes on.<sup>67</sup>

This lends a point to Tara Chand's conclusion that the all-India empire under the Sultans created a political uniformity and a larger allegiance.<sup>68</sup> The larger allegiance coalesced with a love for the larger land, seen and loved with a new vividness and pride as a single country.

This country now began to develop a composite culture in which the language, literature, ideas and arts, brought from outside merged with those existing earlier. Tara Chand gave an account of this in a book justly regarded as a classic and just quoted. It is pointless to repeat in summary what he has spelt out so well. I would only remind colleagues that Tara Chand's survey was not intended to be exhaustive; and that the influence of the earlier culture on Muslims in India was excluded from the scope of his work, though this factor too was crucial in the creation of a composite culture. The exchanges took place at high intellectual levels besides the level of ordinary social intercourse. Much knowledge of Indian arts, for example, was transferred to Persian.

In 1374-75, under the patronage of Firuz Tughluq's governor of Gujarat, came the first known Persian work on Indian music, with the most competent knowledge of Sanskrit-terms imaginable.<sup>69</sup> Nearly a hundred and forty years later (1512-13), Bhuwa, son of Khawas Khan, prepared a wonderfully comprehensive compendium of Indian medicine (Ayurveda), *Ma'dan-i Shifa-i Sikandar Shahi*, with extensive use of Sanskrit texts.<sup>70</sup> Alberuni's cause was by no means dead, however pale, in terms of brilliance his successors might have been.

The cultural efflorescence was accompanied by economic changes of some significance. There was an influx of technology, to which Kosambi had briefly referred and which Irfan Habib has studied in so much detail.<sup>71</sup> It was in these three centuries (13th to 15th) that India received the spinning wheel, the pedals of the loom, cloth-printing, paper, magnetic compass, techniques of large scale arcuate construction, lime mortar, pindrum gearing (to complete the apparatus of the Persian wheel), more effective devices for distillation and sericulture. These undoubtedly led to an expansion of craft production, possibly even to greater cloth production per capita, and certainly to more-extensive use of masonry. There is evidence, literary as well as numismatic, that commerce expanded; and archaeology attests to the fact that the urban decline postulated for the previous period<sup>72</sup> was over and an urban economy of impressive size rapidly developed. The economy had its own unhappy features, such as heavy agrarian taxation and, at least in the initial phase, extensive urban slavery; but these features (by no means, necessarily new) were linked to what in comparison to its immediate predecessor was a distinctly expanding economy.<sup>73</sup>

The cultural and economic changes generated consciousness of unities and inequities that had not existed before. It expressed itself in a religious upsurge of a kind never witnessed since the emergence of Buddhism. A new comprehension of the unity of man, beyond castes, classes and other frontiers, reflected itself in an uncompromising assertion of the Unity of God. Never in India before, neither from the pen of a Hindu nor a Muslim, had there been such an outpouring of the rejection of the concepts of purity and pollution—the basis of the Indian human hierarchy<sup>74</sup> and the theoretical justification of the oppression of the untouchables. Learned scholars have argued whether the religious upsurge had been fertilized by Islamic, especially *sufic*, ideas, or whether it was a logical development from premises inherent in early Indian philosophy. One can deduce from the first, as does R.C. Majumdar, that the movement was outside the pale of Hinduism;<sup>75</sup> from the second, as does Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, that it was a conspiracy by Hinduism to thwart the spread of Islam by borrowing its very colours.<sup>76</sup> These are matters which may only concern those who identify themselves with one particular religious denomination, as delimited by themselves. To me, the signal feature of the popular monotheistic movements of the 15th and 16th centuries was that it was a movement of the Small Man; its leaders came from his ranks and addressed him in his language; and they had an ethical message of substance to deliver to him.

The social character of the movement is best expressed in verses that Guru Arjan (d. 1606) composed in the name of Dhanna Jat;<sup>77</sup>

In Gobind, Gobind, Gobind was Namdev's heart absorbed;  
A calico-printer worth half a *dam*, he became worth a lakh.



Abandoning weaving and stretching thread, Kabir devoted his love to God's feet;

Though a weaver of low family he obtained untold virtues.

Ram Das who used to remove dead cattle, abandoned the world; Became distinguished, and in the company of the saints obtained a sight of God.

Sain, barber and village drudge, (but now) well known in every house

In whose heart the supreme God dwelt is numbered among the saints;

Having heard all this, I, a Jat, applied myself to God's service;

I have met God in person: and great is the good fortune of Dhanna.

Or the proud declaration on behalf of the lowly composed by Guru Amar Das:

Nanak, the gate of salvation is very narrow; only the lowly can pass through.<sup>78</sup>

To Kabir and Nanak and other teachers, denominations were meaningless. They denied they were Hindus or Turks' (Muslims); it is useless our putting such tags on them. With almost a seeming foreknowledge of the current controversy, Kabir, had sung:

Hindus call Him Ram, Muslims Khuda. Says Kabir, whoever lives, never bothers with this duality-

*Kaba'* then becomes Kashi, Ram becomes Rahim.<sup>79</sup>

When Kabir died, so the tradition runs, Hindus and Muslims came to claim him for their own.<sup>80</sup> He thus conformed to the aspirations of Urfi, the great Persian poet at Akbar's court, in a verse which the author of the *Dabistani-i Mazahib* (c. 1655) uses for Kabir's epitaph:

Urfi, live so well with people, good and bad, that when you die  
The Muslims should wash your body in *zamzam* water, and the  
Hindus should cremate it.

In 1590-91, the famous theologian, Abdul Haqq closing his biographical dictionary of Muslim saints, writes that his father when a child asked the author's grandfather whether Kabir, whose verses were current among the people, was a Muslim or a Hindu. The answer was he was a monotheist (*muwahhid*). To the question further whether monotheist, then, is neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim, the old man replied: 'To understand this is difficult: you will understand when you grow up'.<sup>81</sup>

It seems from some recent events and disputes that many of us alas, have still to grow up to understand. But so long as the Indian people cherish a love for their heritage, in ideas and values, the message of medieval cultural efflorescence should surely live with us.

## NOTES

1. *Chachnama*, ed., Umar bin Muhammad Daudpota, Hyderabad, 1939, pp. 208-216.
2. *Futuh al Baldan*, portion tr. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told By its Own Historians*, I, London, 1867, p. 129.
3. Henry Consens, *Antiquities of Sind*, Calcutta, 1929, p. 93.
4. *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, 1925-26, pp. 27-28; B.N. Mukherjee, *Central and Asian Documents on the Old Saka Era*, Varanasi, 1973, pp.56-58.
5. *Zi-shir-i shutar khurdan*, & c. (*Shahnama*).
6. Modern research on the earliest phase of Islam, seen through a biography of Prophet, is best presented in Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, Eng. tr. Penguin Books, 1973. The term *ummi* is referred to on p. 240.
7. Wellhausen's interpretation of the main structure of the Umayyad rule in *Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, essentially based on a detailed analysis of the material in Tabari, still stands, despite criticism by Shaban in the *Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge, 1970.
8. *Chachnama*, pp. 95-96; 181, 182 for the exalted position of the Syrians; p. 192, for the low position of the *Mawali*.
9. *Chachnama*, has many references to *Thakkuras*, e.g. pp. 169, 177, 191, 232, but more explicitly to their adjustment with the Arab regime.
10. *Chachnama*, p. 195.
11. *Chachnama*, p. 211.
12. *Rajatarangini*, tr. A. Stein, , pp. 388-89.
13. *Chachnama*, pp. 186, 194-5.
14. Cousens, *Antiquities of Sind*, pp. 48ff and plate IV (plan of the city).
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-183.
16. R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 61. The statement is retained in the second ed., New Delhi, 1980, pp. 54-5.
17. See Pirenne's *Mohammad and Charlemagne*, Eng. tr. 1939, esp. Part 2, Chapter I, Section 2.
18. Cf. R. Hilton, in *Translation from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London, 1953, pp. 65-66; B. Lewis, *Arabs in History*, London, 1958, pp. 87-92.
19. *Feudal Society*, Emg. tr., London, 1965, p. 65.
20. For the introduction of stirrup among the Arabs see Lynn White Jr. *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, New York, 1966, pp. 18-19. The nailed horse-shoe had reached Byzantium, early in the 10th century (*Ibid.*, p. 58). For the Arabic and Persian evidence, see Irfan Habib, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Varanasi session (1969), p. 159.
21. *Hikayat in Gulistan, Yake az muluk-i Khurasan*, & C.
22. Edward C. Sachau (tr.), *Alberuni's India*, London, 1910, I, p. 22.
23. *Futuh us Salatin*, ed. A.S. Usha, Madras, 1948, p. 29.
24. Mohammad Habib, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni*, Aligarh, 1951, p. 87.
25. *Rajatarangini*, tr. M.A. Stein, I, pp. 272-73. Kalhana does not give the date of the encounter, but puts it in the reign of Samgaramaraja (1003-28).
26. Edward C. Sachau has rendered all of us in debt by his excellently annotated translation of Alberuni's *India* in two volumes (London, 1910). professor Qeyamuddin Ahmad had edited an abridged version of this translation, published by the National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2nd ed. (revised) 1983.
27. Tr. Sachau, II, p. 108. Alberuni is actually quoting Vrahamihira here. Cf. Sachau, I, P. xviii. Perhaps, in real life, Mahmud could not care less!
28. Tr. Sachau, II, p. 280.

29. C.J. Brown, *The Coins of India*, Calcutta, 1922, p. 70.
30. H. Nelson Wright, *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, Delhi, 1936, (pp. 612 catalogue). 67 (commentary). It is only fair to say that Muizzuddin was continuing a tradition of bilingual coinage established by the Ghaznavids.
31. *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, ed. Abdul Hayy Habibi, Kabul, 1343, H. II, pp. 31-32. Raverty, the erudite translator of the work into English notices the implications of this statement, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, tr. Raverty, p. 764). For the date of Tughril's rebellion, see A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, 2nd (revised) ed., Allahabad, 1961, p. 130.
32. Cf. S.R. Sarma in *Aligarh Journal of Oriental Studies*, I (I), 1984, pp. 3-4.
33. *Journal of Indian History*, (JIH), XV (2), 1936, pp. 182-83.
34. Ibn Battuta, *Rihla*, tr. Mehdi Husain, p. 8.
35. Isami, *Futuh-us Salatin*, pp. 484-88, Barani, *Taraikh-i Firuz Shahi*, ed. Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Bib: Ind., Calcutta, 1862, p. 488.
36. Barani, *op.cit.*, p. 505.
37. Isami, *op.cit.*, pp. 464-65.
38. Barani, p. 120.
39. Barani, pp. 216-17.
40. Barani, p. 113.
41. See the Palam Boali Inscription of A.D. 1281 (JASB, XXXXIII (I), 1874 pp. 104ff); and the Sarban Inscription of 1328 (Mehdi Husain, *Rise and Fall of Mohammad Tughluq*, London, 1938, pp. 246-47.
42. Barani, p. 546.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 554 (read Sahan for Sipahan).
44. W.H. Moreland; *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Cambridge, 1929, pp. 32, 225, 230.
45. Barani, p. 547.
46. Barani, p. 554.
47. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, III, pp. 103-105.
48. *Nuh Sipahr*, ed. Mohammad Wahid Mirza, London, 1950, pp. 151-195.
49. Barani, p. 485; Isami, 472 (where for metrical reasons, perhaps, the name is given as *Sargadari*, but a reference to heaven in the couplet shows *sarg* represents *swarga*.)
50. Isami, p. 515. For Muhammad Tughluq's interest in yogic practices see Ibn Battuta, tr. Mehdi Hasan, p.266.
51. Order issued to officials in 1329. Mr. Simon Digby of Channel Islands, U.K., possesses a clear photograph of the document.
52. Cuningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, III, pp. 103-5.
53. *J.H.I.* XV (2), 181.
54. H.B.W. Garrick in Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey Reports*, XXIII, pp. 116-7.
55. *Fawa'id-ul Fawwad*, ed. Mohammad Latif Malik, Lahore, 1966, pp.118-19.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 417-18; Nizamuddin's preceptor, Farid, told him not to bother with this, not because what the *yogi* was furnishing him with was wrong, but because he would not have any use for it, since he was not to marry. See also *ibid.*, pp. 404-405.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 305-306, 308.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.
60. *Fawa'id-ul Fawwad*, ed. Muhammad Latif Malik, Lahore 1966, pp. 339-40.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-9.
62. *Enquiry*, Delhi, New Series II, 2 (Old series, No. II), 1965, pp. 496-7. He contests J.B. Chaudhuri's view on p. 56.
63. In, respectively, the Palam and Sarban inscriptions: see references given above.

64. Preface to *History and Culture of Indian People*, Vol. V, p. xiv.
65. Majh Ki War, *Guru Granth Sahib*. The translation is that of Macauliffe.
66. See references to this inscription above.
67. *Nuh Sipahr*, pp. 179-81.
68. Isami, pp. 604-605.
69. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 2nd. ed., Allahabad, 1963, p. 141.
70. The work, *Ghuniyat-ul Munya*, which is unfortunately anonymous, has been edited by Shahab Sarmadee, Bombay, 1978.
71. Nawal Kishore editions, Lucknow, 1877, 1889 (page-to-page correspondence with the earlier ed.)
72. D.D. Kosambi, *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay, 1956, p. 370. Irfan Habib, 'Technology and Society in the 13th and 14th Centuries', *Proc. Ind. Hist. Cong.*, Varanasi Session 1969; pp. 139-61, and 'Medieval Technology: Exchange between India and the Islamic World', *Aligarh Journal of Oriental Studies*, II (1-2), 1985, pp. 196-222.
73. R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*, c. 300-c. 1000, New Delhi, 1987.
74. Cf. Irfan Habib, 'Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate', *Indian Historical Review*, IV (2), 1978, pp. 287-303.
75. Cf. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Eng. ed., London, 1972.
76. This follows from Majumdar's identification of Hinduism with 'temples and monasteries' and Brahmans (*History and Culture of Indian People*, I, pp. xxxi, xxxiii).
77. *History of Freedom Movement*, Karachi, 1957, I, pp. 17, 20.
78. Asa, *Guru Sahib*, Macauliffe's translation modified.
79. Gurjari Kiwar, *Guru Granth Sahib*, Macauliffe's translation.
80. *Kabir Granthavali*, ed. Shyam Sundar Das, Kashi, p. 54.
81. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, p. 393. Elsewhere Abul Fazl says of Kabir: Some of the truth was revealed to him, and he rejected the obsolete customs of society.
82. The passage is in *Akhbar-ul Akhyar*, Deoband, A.H. 1332, p. 306. The word used for Hindu is *kafir*. Abdul Haqq's grandfather Sa'dullah died in 1523, when his father was eight years of age.

ASHOK MITRA\*



## *On Some Recent Trends in the Indian Economy\**

1. This note does not pretend to be by any stretch a full-blown commentary on either recent developments in the Indian economy or of policies pursued by the government. It merely draws attention to certain facts and trends so that there could be a shared discussion around them.
2. Must one take official claims with respect to achieved rates of growth at their face value? Consider what has happened to agriculture over the past ten or twelve years. Measured from peak to peak, or from trough to trough, the actual compound rate of growth is still less than 2 per cent per year over large tracts of the country, and substantially below the rate of growth of population.
3. Changes introduced in the index of production vitiate comparison of industrial performance during the past decade with performance in the preceding thirty years. Even were the official figure of a 7 to 8 per cent rate of growth to be accepted, mention has to be made of a number of disturbing factors. There is an element of lopsidedness in the achieved progress. A preponderant feature of industrial development over the past decade is its import bias—the extraordinary dependence on imported raw materials, finished and semi-finished components and capital equipment. It is also characterised by a marked shift towards the direction of production of luxury consumption goods. The domestic market for industrial output is still narrow. In the absence of drastic structural reforms, and with generally indifferent performance on the export front, the overall demand is precariously unstable, and the phenomenon of huge excess capacity continues to be a basic reality. At least two other disturbing features are worth mentioning. The regional disparities in industrial growth have widened further. That apart, there is hardly any impact on the level of employment. The fact of the existence of close to 200,000 sick and closed manufacturing units in the country emphasises the anomalous nature of the growth that has taken place: in the net, it has been labour-displacing—and, in several instances, at the expense of small and medium-scale enterprise.

\* Formerly Finance Minister, Government of West Bengal.

\*\* Background paper circulated at the *Social Scientist* seminar on 'Indian Economy and Debt' held on August 7-8, 1989.

4. The leading growth sector is however neither agriculture nor industry. It is the services sector, dependent heavily on government outlay in such spheres as defence, public administration and on commercial activities such as banking, insurance, tourism, entertainments, etc. Were we to measure the past decade's growth in terms of expansion of material production alone, it is doubtful whether per capita output has at all advanced. The explosion in service activities also reflects the growing income inequalities in the system. There is no evidence of any significant shift in occupational pattern: two-thirds of our population remain dependent on agriculture and allied activities.

5. It is also necessary to draw attention to the other bizarre fact: a supposedly 5 per cent annual rate of growth in national income has actually been accompanied by a decline in the aggregate rate of savings. Growth has therefore been largely sustained by borrowed external resources, which now represent more than a quarter of the total development outlay. We have deviated to a major extent from our earlier goal of national self-reliance. Perhaps the composition of growth itself has also induced a lowering in the rate of savings. The call has gone out for increased luxury consumption, including the consumption of services; this cannot but erode the ethos of thrift and plain living.

6. The nature and pattern of growth have given rise to a grave crisis in several directions. There is a crisis in employment, a fiscal crisis, and a crisis in the balance of payments. The government's organic inability to even comprehend the gravity of problems afflicting the nation is illustrated by its proffered prescription to cure unemployment. Where a total annual development outlay of Rs. 50,000 crores has failed to create new jobs, it is pretended that an additional expenditure of Rs. 1,000 crores would effect a miracle.

7. A concomitant of the services-and-luxury-consumption-sector-led growth is that direct tax rates had to be pushed down and those comfortably placed to pay taxes offered kid glove treatment. The compulsions of accounting balance have therefore led to increasing dependence on indirect levies (including periodic increases in administered prices) and created money. Both devices push up prices, and thus further shift income distribution in favour of the affluent sections. The implicit logic of the growth model pursued also calls for boosting demand for services and luxury consumption through fiscal manipulations, including large appropriations in the name of defence. Large-scale deficit financing gets built into the arrangements, and prices shoot up. The fiscal crisis, through this process, becomes endemic.

8. Inflation can of course be kept in check up to a point through large imports, but this only makes the crisis in balance of payments even more daunting. Official propaganda cannot really hide the fact that, notwithstanding sweeping dismantling of industrial controls, sustained subsidy schemes and continuous depreciation in the value of the rupee, our exports have kept hovering around 5 to 6 per cent of national income, not substantially higher than the level it had already attained

four decades ago. Thanks to recent policy shifts, imports have however jumped, and are now close to 10 per cent of national income. There is little evidence that the government intends to rein in imports. (Despite record production of foodgrains in two successive years, import of foodgrains has been resumed; import of sugar and oilseeds too may soon be decided upon.)

9. Official views and policies with respect to export stimulation have been heavily influenced by the attitude of international financial institutions. These institutions purposely under-emphasise the external barriers to trade. The U.S. threat under the Super 301 clause is a case in point; one must also mention the concerted moves of the Western governments in course of the so-called Uruguay round of discussions now on to apply pressure on the Third World countries. Moreover, notwithstanding the relaxation of industrial and import controls and heavy export subsidies, the problem of attaining scale economies continues to haunt export-aspiring domestic industries. Unit cost can be brought down only if the scale of production is enlarged; such enlargement is however contingent upon considerable expansion taking place in export demand, which in its turn will remain sticky till as long as unit cost of production is not brought down. The vicious circle is yet to be broken.

10. The consequence is that we have been caught in a murderous pincer. With Fund-Bank encouragement, the government has, since the early 1980's, all its eggs in the services-cum-luxury consumption-cum-exports basket; it has also, with alacrity, indulged in indiscriminate external borrowing programmes. Our external debt has as a result almost quadrupled in the past six or seven years, from less than Rs. 25,000 crores to around Rs. 100,000 crores. The debt service burden has shot up to 40 per cent of merchandise exports and 30 per cent of current account receipts. The inexorable logic of this kind of mad inducement has now begun to unfold itself. In the more recent years, our government has been forced into increasing commercial borrowing at exorbitant terms. There is no question that we have already crossed the threshold of a classical debt trap. We are now the third leading debtors among the Third World countries, having displaced Argentina, South Korea, Indonesia and Philippines, and occupying the place immediately after Brazil and Mexico. (One incidental datum should contribute to some food for thought. Brazil imports only the equivalent of 5 per cent of her national income and exports as much as 10 per cent of national income, yet the debt trap has shut all openings for her. We, in contrast, import to the extent of 10 per cent of national income and export only around 5 per cent. If we continue in this manner, our fate could be worse than Brazil's.)

11. There are indicators which suggest that the difficulties in the country's external accounts are likely to further aggravate: (a) remittances from West Asia have started to taper off; (b) with the cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq and the re-induction of Egypt in the Arab League, the price of petroleum crude is likely to firm up; (c) for

reasons of political exigency, the government may in the current year be hustled into emergency import of, among other things, foodgrains, sugar and edible oils; and (d) as information regarding the precarious nature of the country's foreign exchange position spreads, deposits in the non-resident external accounts with the Indian banks could begin to shrink.

12. In these circumstances, the government, given its composition and class bias, is likely to do more of what it had been doing in the recent past. It will approach the Fund and the Bank and the Aid-India Consortium for more concessional aid and stand-by credits. The international institutions will have got India where they wanted; they will extract a price from us before they agree to any extra aid or concessions: we must liberalise our economy further according to their dictates. Should our government yield, it will be a case of the remedy being worse than the disease, for, with further liberalisation, our problems can only aggravate. There will be no way then of our avoiding further recourse to borrowing from private commercial banks and succumbing further to unequal collaboration arrangements transnational corporations are ever anxious to thrust upon us. We will thus sink deeper in the morass of the debt trap.

13. Meanwhile, given the government's opaque fiscal policies, internal prices are likely to continue to rise. It is astonishing-or perhaps not really so-that despite the claimed fantastic jump in foodgrain output, food prices have increased by around 10 per cent over the year. The rise in output by more than 40 million tons in a single year has not been reflected in food procurement; rice procurement hardly shows an increase over last year's level; the procurement of wheat too is way below expectations. One inference could be that the government has succumbed to pressure and is purposely allowing private stocks to be built up so that racketeers could have a field day in case the harvest dips in the succeeding years. Should developments follow such a course, there could be a convergence of two separate catastrophes: (a) runaway inflation within the country; and (b) a collapse in external accounts.

14. Several questions arise. This government has to be saved from itself. Or assuming a new government assumes charge in a few months' time, it must be advised how it could proceed so as to protect this nation's honour and dignity and, at the same time advance the national goal of balanced and reasonably fast economic growth. Attention should, one feels, focus on the following

15. (a) There must be a reappraisal of the policies experimented with in the recent past, including the large-scale relaxation of import controls. The more negative aspects of recent liberalisation policies need to be carefully gone into, such as excessive, indiscriminate and often thoughtless import of consumption goods, of components and spares, and also of capital goods which have not only used up precious foreign exchange but severely damaged the domestic production structure too, apart from distorting the pattern of income distribution within the country. One can here pick the example of the Maruti car, or of the



importation, via package deals, of power plants, which has caused havoc to the BHEL units.

16. (b) The dream of services-luxury consumption-and export-led growth is a chimera. The policies tried out pursuant to this dream have not worked and will not work. They have, on the other hand, induced gross perversities in income distribution whose social and political implications are grave. The goal of steady reduction in unit cost, which is a per-requisite for stimulating exports, does not go together with the fact of persistent government-induced spiraling of prices. Fiscal discipline must therefore precede export ambitions. In view of the experience of the past few years, efforts should once more concentrate on expanding domestic demand. This implies that we as a nation can no longer avoid tackling the structural problems which impede the growth of the internal market.

17. (c) The remedies which suggest themselves are consistent with the preambles of our Constitution. The material means of production should be more evenly shared, thereby releasing the pent-up impulses for growth within our society. This calls for a time-bound programme of land reforms, including land consolidation where feasible, and experiments with service and production cooperatives. The programme should also call for a crash programme of irrigation so that all regions of the country derive the benefits of multiple cropping and high yields which controlled supply of irrigation water renders possible.

18. (d) To ensure results, the thrust for structural reforms must come from below. This suggests that the highest importance be accorded to a time-bound literacy programme, covering all sections of the population including tribals and women. Annual targets should be drawn up in detail, responsibilities assigned at all levels, monitoring arrangements made foolproof; heads must roll should there be any sloth in performance at any level.

19. (e) Without a drastic re-ordering of our domestic pattern of growth, it will be impossible to withstand the pressure from external sources, including foreign banks and multinational corporations. A re-structuring of both the national budget and the national plan is therefore crucially necessary. Their re-structuring must place the highest stress on eliminating import bias from all development projects and public programmes, and adapt technological systems with an eye to minimising labour displacement.

20. (f) Accountability must also return to the system. A great deal of money is being wasted in the name of defence and national security. The nation's defence preparedness, one dares to say, can be maintained even with a reduced level of outlay, and a sensible foreign policy can play a role here. Certainly it is scandalous that we have emerged as the leading arms importer of the world.

21. (g) Several other disciplines must also be enforced if imports are to be curtailed. We should take a fresh look at the exchange entitlement programmes, and pick and choose in the matter of capital goods im-

ports; imports of consumption goods have to be severely frowned upon. Some restrictions on the use of petroleum products must be made operational. This should persuade us to take a closer look at the priorities currently determining our industrial and technological research programme.

22. (h) Clumsy official procedures which impair efficiency should be eliminated, but that does not mean that policies sanctioned by the nation aimed against industrial concentration should be cynically scuttled. The rich have not delivered growth, so why should we pamper them? Apart from other factors, a completely free economic system, bereft of the controls which operate even in the United States, will not go with the Indian milieu. Social consciousness is a function of time. Provided the affluent sections are permitted to enjoy continuous high living at the expense of the rest of the population, there might soon be a frightening explosion of popular wrath which totally engulf the polity.

23. (i) Finally, the authorities must be very, very careful before extending further the centralised model of economic administration they have increasingly fallen in love with. This model, with the Union government enjoying the commanding heights of decision-making and in total control of financial resources, now experimented with for more than three and a half decades, has fostered neither a satisfactory rate of growth over the long run nor increased regional balance, nor, for that matter, led to any equalisation of income and wealth between classes. Experience should suggest that a change is called for, and the constituent states of the Union be allowed increased powers and responsibilities so that they could try to accelerate the process of growth in their own manner and according to their own priorities within the broad framework of goals and objectives agreed upon at the national level. There is, instead, a trend in the reverse direction, with the Centre taking over functions which, according to the Constitution, legitimately belong to the states. The states represent linguistic and cultural entities of weighty proportions; they often reflect major ethnic emotions too. Certain things could be taken for granted at the time of independence. But times have changed, what was once inchoate consciousness is becoming ferociously articulate. If the central authorities fail to take note of these realities, not only will there be little growth, the entire system itself could be severely disturbed, leading both to enormous waste of national resources and to a considerable weakening of national unity.

24. One is tempted to add a last point. The nation must be led back to accountability and integrity. The decline in moral leadership has to be halted. But all this has to be accompanied by an openness in administration. We are at present told too little by the government about economic realities; policies and practices are undertaken and very important decisions, with major implications for the nation's future, are reached on the sly. Those who, without bothering to consult either

Parliament or the people, have pushed us into an inexorable external debt trap in the course of a bare six to seven years, must be made answerable to the nation, and safeguards must be evolved so that scope for repetition of such malfeasance in future could be totally eliminated.

## DISCUSSION / VIVEKANAND JHA\*

### *Ancient Indian Political History: Possibilities and Pitfalls\*\**

The theme paper 'Writing of Political History of Ancient India: New Trends and Prospects' by Professor S.R. Goyal has not come a day too soon. Professor Goyal is a senior academic based in a university and an author of several books on ancient Indian political history. His position, scholarship and experience entitle him to share his thoughts on the state of the discipline. He is frankly dissatisfied with the chronological narration of political events with attention primarily focused on kings or dynasties in most research works.<sup>1</sup> He finds monographs on two successive monarchs describing the same political and administrative set-up inane and boring. Merely paraphrasing material from literary chronicles or inscriptions is dubbed 'pseudo-history'. Treatment of political history as unrelated to history of other aspects of life is, according to him, out of date. Thus writing on the decline of Magadha in the fifth-tenth centuries AD without due stress on the phenomenon of feudalism or proper appreciation of the social, economic and religious milieu is regarded inadequate. Not identifying feudalism as the central theme of the early medieval Rajasthan polity is considered an avoidable lapse. Professor Goyal heavily underlines the need to outgrow the narrow and antiquated framework of the pioneering and distinguished authors of ancient Indian political history who were seriously handicapped by the paucity of sources and undeveloped methods and techniques of interpretation. He feels that ancient Indian political history has over the decades been losing ground to social, economic and cultural history.<sup>2</sup> He is not sure if the position of primacy political history once held can be fully retrieved. He is, however, keen

\* Director (Journal, Publications and Library), ICHR, New Delhi.

\*\* The article has been written in response to a paper 'Writing of Political History of Ancient India: New Trends and Prospects' by Professor S.R. Goyal, Head of the Department of History, Jodhpur University, circulated among a large number of scholars for their reaction, is confined to issues raised by him and no attempt is made here to present my own comprehensive view on the subject. I am grateful to Professor R.S. Sharma, Professor Irfan Habib and Professor B.D. Chattopadhyaya for their useful comments. An earlier version was presented at the Golden Jubilee session of the Indian History Congress held at Gorakhpur University from 30 December 1989 to 1 January 1990.

that it recovers some of its old prestige as early as possible. He shows an awareness of advances made in the West and is firmly against Indian historians lagging behind much longer. To achieve this he suggests a substantial change in the content and character of the discipline. Political history, in his opinion, should be viewed as the study of political activity in the total situational context; forces and factors which profoundly influence people in society and condition events deserve adequate attention; and 'why' and 'how' are considered not less important than 'what' in any serious and worthwhile recounting of the past.<sup>3</sup> As a corrective to the persisting malaise, it is suggested that different aspects of history—political, social, economic, religious and cultural—should be studied as facets of an integrated reality and not in isolation from each other; the focus of study should shift from individuals to institutions,<sup>4</sup> political structure, power and environment; and developments in other branches of knowledge such as Economics, Demography, Anthropology, Sociology, etc., should be made use of to gain insights and enrich perspectives for political history.

The need for interdisciplinary approach to comprehend the complex reality of the past has been repeatedly stressed by scholars before. As early as 1963 D.D. Kosambi commended this approach in his famous article, 'Combined Methods in Indology'.<sup>5</sup> Even so, the formulation is quite sensible and valid and Professor Goyal's reiteration of its intrinsic worth helps to drive home the point further among serious researchers. With the help of examples from his own works and those of other historians, Professor Goyal shows how, through proper handling, the extant sources can be made to yield more data and add new meaning to political history. Thus a careful study of ceremonials, symbols and motifs in their historical context is likely to shed more light on political institutions and ideologies of the ancient period. Similarly political history can be enriched through an in depth exploration of themes like the relationship of education to power, of religious and social groups to state structure and of geographical background, landed property and economic resources to wide-ranging political developments. These are only illustrative samples and do not exhaust the scope of political history. More themes and areas of research in political history can be identified by individual scholars on the basis of their expertise and specialization, range and depth of scholarship, vision, reflection and imagination. Professor Goyal deserves credit for stressing the need for change and improvement in ancient Indian political history and for his readiness to discard the stale and the puerile and to receive and welcome the best from both West and East, old and new.

There are, however, some points of reservation. To begin with, I am surprised to find Professor Goyal suggesting that the geographical boundaries of Independent India should determine its geographical boundaries in the past also for the purpose of historical investigation and the regions presently within Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and adjoining territories should be scrupulously

excluded from the pre-Independence political history of the country. To ensure that no doubt is left regarding the implications of this proposition, he points out that he envisaged little scope in the ancient Indian political history of his conception for the study of Achaemenid, Alexandrian, Indo-Greek and Pahlava invasions or other events which took place outside the territory of the present Indian Union. 'The rigour of logic demands that', he says. Such projection of the present into the past, however, seems illogical to me. As inheritors of a past going back to millennia and with roots in many lands and among many peoples, we are not authorized to arbitrarily divide Indian history into segments of our choice. The Empires of Asoka, Kaniska and Akbar transcended the present-day national boundaries and they have to be studied as a whole and not in parts. The Aryan problem cannot be properly understood within the confines of the present-day political boundaries of India. It is true that in the post-Independence period Indian archaeologists have identified more than seven hundred sites of the Indus Valley or Harappa Culture of the Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Late Harappan phases inside the country and excavated to a varying degree as many as forty of them,<sup>6</sup> but a complete picture of this culture can be had only if such important non-Indian sites as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro are also included in our study. Themes like slavery, feudalism, imperialism, modernization and social justice have transnational boundaries and need to be studied in their wider world context. Reducing the coverage of ancient Indian political history in terms of the present geographical boundaries will ill serve the cause of our discipline. Objectively speaking, most of us do not have a composite all-India perspective even in terms of our present political boundaries. Researchers in north India generally know little and care less about south Indian history and *vice versa*; and a further narrowing of the coverage of ancient Indian political history is unlikely to prove a step in the right direction.

I also find little substance in Professor Goyal's categorical remark that 'The age of European domination of Indian historiography is not yet over' (surely the thirteen volumes alone of *The Indian Historical Review* which I have edited from its inception disprove that); and yet I have not the slightest hesitation in duly acknowledging the bare truth that non-Indian historians have contributed significantly to the understanding of all aspects of our ancient history, including the political.<sup>7</sup> The concern expressed at Indian political history being 'viewed and written by either Europeans or English-educated Indians' is, therefore, misplaced.<sup>8</sup> Knowledge and research of a high order in fact brook no artificial barriers. Though specificity as to time and place is important in history,<sup>9</sup> there is no doubt about the 'interconnectedness of human history' and historical scholarship being an 'international enterprise', as Professor Akira Iriye noted in his Presidential address to the American Historical Association.<sup>10</sup> The road to progress in ancient Indian political history, therefore, lies not

through isolation or parochialism, but through openness and interaction with the community of historians busy enriching methodologies and perspectives elsewhere. Indian historiography must in its own interest strive to approach and realize the best attained in other parts of the world.

Professor Goyal speaks of the Marxist approach in Indian history as evidence of European domination and as a major factor of the decline of ancient Indian political history. He argues that since the mode of production and political history have base-superstructure relationship and Marx propounded the thesis of the 'withering away of the state', political history has been inevitably relegated to the background by the Indian Marxist historians. Such a generalization, however, appears to me to be based on allergy rather than on sound scholarship in this area and patently lacks substance. Momentous ideas seldom remain confined within a narrow geographical setting and cannot be easily or wilfully ostracized or banished; they deserve to be seriously studied and appraised for their merits and limitations rather than despised, feared or damned wholesale. Marxism, like history itself, is not the exclusive possession of any particular country or people. Though initiated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the nineteenth century, Marxism has grown enormously in dimension and depth and taken firm roots as a major strand in the discipline of history. Indian Marxist historiography, too, has come a long way in the past few decades<sup>11</sup> and it has not provided any evidence of mindless copying of European or Eurocentric texts. Historians like D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma and Irfan Habib, among others, have patiently applied dialectical or historical materialism as a potent tool of understanding the historical process and analysis of empirical data from a wide variety of sources for illuminating India's past. Even though the mode of production has been given much emphasis in their writings and major historical developments have been sought to be related to it,<sup>12</sup> it is inaccurate to say that these historians have overlooked political history. What they have actually done is to deny it complete autonomy from social, economic and cultural history.<sup>12a</sup> If this were wrong, one wonders why Professor Goyal has himself criticized R.G. Bhandarkar, K.P. Jayaswal, R.K. Mookerji, Dasharatha Sharma and B.P. Sinha for allegedly not adopting an integrated and synthetic approach while writing ancient Indian political history.<sup>13</sup> According to Marc Bloch, the variety of historical evidence is 'nearly infinite'; the deeper the research, the more the light of the evidence must converge from sources of many different kinds; and within any society, whatever its nature, everything is mutually controlled and connected—the political and social structure, the economy, the beliefs, the most rudimentary as well as the subtlest manifestations of the mind.<sup>14</sup> E.H. Carr contends that the historian must seek to bring into picture all known or knowable facts relevant, in one sense or another, to the theme on which he is engaged and the interpretations proposed.<sup>15</sup> G.R. Elton underlines that political re-

alities often seemingly embedded in non-political areas that are not immediately apparent as political—the social structure of the polity, the personal lives of its members, the philosophies and religions and sciences which influence political action by creating influential ways of thinking—contribute something to the needs of the political historian.<sup>16</sup> This is precisely where one would set the contribution of the Indian Marxist historians.

The Marxist historians have often been accused of staunchly subscribing to mechanical or economic determinism.<sup>17</sup> In an exceptionally perceptive article marked by transparent candour, 'Problems of Marxist Historiography',<sup>18</sup> Irfan Habib admits that Marxists are themselves partly to blame for this misunderstanding because their own description of historical materialism has often been couched in deterministic terms.<sup>19</sup> Actually, he points out, Marx's view of historical development is far more refined and persuasive. According to E.H. Carr, this so-called 'determinism' is a 'misleading' projection of dialectical materialism.<sup>20</sup> 'It is not inevitable, nor even true, that a given amount of wealth will lead to a given type of development', asserts Kosambi.<sup>21</sup> The uneven pace of historical change shows that the course of evolution is not a mere mechanical process, states Susobhan Sarkar.<sup>22</sup> Following Marx, the Indian Marxist historians have also duly emphasized the role of ideas and ideological developments. Kosambi categorically states: 'Ideas (including superstition) become a force once they have gripped the masses' which no historian can afford to 'dismiss or ignore'.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between the conditions of material production and the world of ideas is complex and mutual; and it is wrong to postulate a unidimensional chain of determination running from one to the other, holds Prabhat Patnaik.<sup>24</sup> Marx 'looked forward to ideas at last gaining ascendancy over matter' and there is 'no alternative to entering the battle of ideas', observes Irfan Habib.<sup>25</sup> In fact, in his famous book, *Man Makes Himself*,<sup>26</sup> V. Gordon Childe clearly showed that production technology is inseparable from ideas—that technology is not created by matter, but by human ideas reflected in skill, dexterity and science.

It is not also that Marxist historians in India are a homogeneous lot or a monolithic group fanatically adhering to a rigid preconceived framework of development or to historically untenable dogmas. Both Kosambi and Sharma have questioned the validity of notions of Oriental Despotism, unchanging and stagnant East, and the Asiatic mode of production found in the writings of Marx and Engels under the influence of Hegel<sup>26a</sup> and early Western Orientalists. Sharma has pointed out that the model of social formations provided by historical materialism needs alteration in the light of advance in historical knowledge during the last one hundred years.<sup>27</sup> The orthodox Marxist scheme of periodization (Primitive Communism-Slavery-Feudalism-Capitalism) to which S.A. Dange fully subscribed in *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*<sup>28</sup> has not been found applicable to



India by Kosambi,<sup>29</sup> Irfan Habib<sup>30</sup> and R.S. Sharma.<sup>31</sup> Unlike Walter Ruben who in his *Einführung in der Indienkunde*<sup>32</sup> maintained that ancient society in India, the Indus Civilization as well as the Mauryan Empire, should be classified as 'slave-owning', Kosambi does not find a classical slave economy as in Greece or Rome in any period of Indian history. He observes:

The diehard argument that some people were not free, that there was some sort of slavery, is not the point here. The issue is of quantity, which by massive change transforms quality too.<sup>33</sup>

This view is shared by D.R. Chanana, according to whom notwithstanding the employment of slaves in large number in the production process in certain regions in post-Vedic and Mauryan times, slavery did not constitute the dominant mode of production at any stage and was certainly not instrumental in the transition from communal to class society.<sup>34</sup> Sharma expresses doubts regarding slave labour being a significant component of the economy of the Indus Civilization,<sup>35</sup> and states that since slavery was not confined to the sudras and only a section of them were legally slaves, despite their basic servility, the sudras 'cannot be called slaves'<sup>36</sup> and ancient Indian society cannot be called a slave society.<sup>37</sup> Kosambi's two-stage theory of Indian feudalism—'feudalism from above', meaning a state wherein an Emperor or powerful king levied tribute from subordinates who still ruled in their own right and did what they liked within their territories as long as they paid the paramount ruler, and 'feudalism from below', meaning a class of landowners which later developed within the village, held an intermediary position between the state and the peasantry, collected taxes, was subject to military service and gradually wielded armed power over the local population<sup>38</sup>—has not been accepted by Irfan Habib,<sup>39</sup> R.S. Sharma<sup>40</sup> and others.<sup>41</sup> The pioneering and most comprehensive work on feudalism in the early Indian context is no doubt R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism: c.300–1200*.<sup>42</sup> On the basis of a critical analysis of an impressive mass of epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and literary evidence pertaining to land grants to brahmanas, monasteries and temples as well as to kinsmen, officers and vassals of rulers in northern India, Sharma has demarcated three main phases—(i) c. AD 300–750; (ii) c. AD 750–1000; and (iii) c. AD 1000–1200, coinciding with the origin, expansion and culmination as well as decline respectively of the Indian variant of feudalism, a fairly widespread phenomenon found in many regions and countries of the world, though not everywhere. He has, however, been severely criticized not only by non-Marxist historians like D.C. Sircar,<sup>43</sup> even Marxists have emphasized the need for further refinement and sophistication in the concept on the basis of a study of more adequate data and some of them like Harbans Mukhia<sup>44</sup> and Irfan Habib<sup>45</sup> have questioned the very appropriateness of the term 'feudalism' to characterize the Indian polity and socio-economic formation of the period. Marxists also differ

considerably in their assessment of the spread of *bhakti* or devotion as a progressive or retrogressive social movement and its linkage with feudalism.<sup>46</sup>

Evidently in their analysis of the problems of ancient Indian history in the light of Marxist theory, Indian Marxist historians have shown extreme flexibility and honest divergence. This is as it should be, for history is essentially a discipline based on a critical evaluation of evidence as to facts; and all generalizations are subject to modification as new evidence is obtained, or there is new assessment of older evidence. 'It is the business of the historian to be always testing his classifications in order to justify their existence and, if it seems advisable, to revise them', counselled Marc Bloch.<sup>47</sup> Theories cannot be used to prove facts; facts must prove theories, argues D.H.H. Ingalls.<sup>48</sup> Professor Irfan Habib rightly points out:

Research expands and exposes facts we did not know of before: without undue modesty, we can say we know more about India's past than Marx did. Can his statements on India be accepted as the last word even when we recognise that his information was limited? Naturally, extended knowledge imposes on us the task of testing our older interpretation against our information as it now stands. It has to be an unceasing process.<sup>49</sup>

This new thinking in Indian Marxist historiography is not an isolated phenomenon. Soviet scholars at the recent ICHR-sponsored Indo-Soviet Seminar on 'The Modes of Production: Genesis and Growth of Capitalism' held in New Delhi from 17 to 19 October 1989 frankly acknowledged that though human society has passed through a few successive stages of evolution, the Marxian model of socio-economic formations in respect of the world historical process cannot be rigidly applied to each country or region and the sequence has not been identical everywhere,<sup>50</sup> that not only certain phases, even the whole formations have been skipped out and new modes of production have appeared as a result of interaction between societies at different stages of development;<sup>51</sup> that the distinction between the superstructure and the base has been overemphasized, the notion of means of production includes a wider range of phenomena of social life than mere material instruments of labour<sup>52</sup> and the foundations of cultural and civilizational processes do not lie in the modes of production;<sup>53</sup> that the important role and influence of the superstructure and human factor—individual and social psychology and consciousness, the phenomena of culture, religion, ideology, system of values, tradition and so on; even such non-class forms of exploitation as the exploitation of the talented by the mediocre, of the diligent by the lazy and of the people of integrity by the corrupt—on historical development have been grossly underplayed;<sup>54</sup> and that the study of the superstructure can be quite useful in ascertaining the transition from one socio-economic formation to another.<sup>55</sup> All this only shows the vigour of Marxism as a living, ever re-

newing, creative model of historical analysis and its keenness to shed dogmatism and ideological stereotypes.

The prediction regarding the 'withering away of the state' (Engels' famous phrase) is closely interlinked with the disappearance of social classes and emergence of a classless society in the final stage of socialism;<sup>56</sup> and it is yet too early to expect that phase to have been reached, historical processes embracing humanity being by their nature of a very long duration.<sup>57</sup> Far from being a spent force, the state is still the most powerful instrument of change in several countries;<sup>58</sup> and Indian Marxist historians have not ignored either the state or political institutions in their writings on ancient Indian political history.<sup>59</sup> Professor Goyal's censure of Marxism and Indian Marxist historiography is, therefore, clearly less than fair.<sup>60</sup>

I am much less sure than Professor Goyal of the adequacy of sources for ancient Indian political history ('the period of collecting the basic material for writing the political history of ancient India is by and large over', he claims) or of the validity of the sharp distinction he makes between a Sanskritist, an epigraphist, an archaeologist, a numismatist and a political historian. It is true that we have much more literary, epigraphical, numismatic and archaeological sources at our disposal than our predecessors. But there are still enormous gaps in our sources and the situation does not warrant any smugness on our part. We do not have critical editions/translations of most of the Prakrit texts and much more needs to be done regarding texts in Sanskrit, Pali and various regional languages. The published material in numismatics, whose value for reconstructing ancient Indian political history is well-known, is only a microscopic fraction of what is lying unscrutinized in the collections of various museums and archaeological departments of the central and state governments. In his article 'Problems of Historical Writing in India with reference to the History of the Deccan' in Sarvepalli Gopal and Romila Thapar, ed., *Problems of Historical Writing in India*,<sup>61</sup> T.V. Mahalingam emphasized the urgency of an elaborate scheme for the complete and systematic editions of the innumerable inscriptions that had been and were being collected, deciphered and interpreted by epigraphists in south India. In his Presidential address to the Ancient India section of the Kurukshetra session of the Indian History Congress (1982), S. Settar observed that though three-fourths of the history of the subcontinent is preserved in sources found in the peninsula, neither historians at the national level nor those at the regional level can claim to have successfully exploited this material.<sup>62</sup> So too in his Presidential address to the Historical Archaeology, Numismatics and Epigraphy section of the Hyderabad session of the Indian History Congress (1978), A.M. Shastri remarked that the inscriptions published so far represent only a fraction of what has been collected and is lying in dumps with the various agencies.<sup>63</sup> To remedy the situation and make available the unexplored epigraphical material for historical research, the ICHR launched in 1973 an

inscriptions programme covering a sizeable number of inscriptions of various dynasties from the sixth century onwards in several handy volumes. So far a few volumes such as *Inscriptions of the Western Gangas* edited by K.V. Ramesh, *Inscriptions of the Maukharis, Later Guptas, Puspabhutis and Yasovarman of Kanauj* edited by K.K. Thaplyal, *Inscriptions of the Suryavamsi Gajapatis of Orissa* edited by R. Subrahmanyam, *Inscriptions of the Pallavas* and *A Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Tamilnadu and Kerala State Archives, Vols I-V*, edited by T.V. Mahalingam have been published. Some more volumes are in press or under preparation by the ICHR or Archaeological Survey of India under its *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* programme or other agencies. These apart from the various published collections of inscriptions cannot be said to exhaust the need for further compilation of inscriptions necessary for studying ancient Indian political history.

The situation in Archaeology is somewhat better. R.S. Sharma rightly pointed out in his mimeographed paper 'Archaeology and History' presented at the ICHR-sponsored International Seminar on 'New Archaeology and India' held in Delhi from 15 to 17 October 1988 that 'as a result of work done in the last forty years or so, we have reached a stage where we can replace text-aided archaeology with archaeology-aided texts'.<sup>64</sup> The emphasis on the retrieval of every piece of data has made the identification of social, economic and other processes areawise and periodwise possible for the historian.<sup>64a</sup> In his mimeographed article 'Archaeology in the post-Modern Era' presented at this seminar, Ian Hodder pointed out that history needed to be re-integrated with archaeology and archaeologists were now particularly concerned with generalizations regarding economic and social processes. The ICHR has recently (1989) brought out in two volumes a monumental collective work, *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, edited by the late A. Ghosh, former Director-General, Archaeological Survey of India, which contains the major findings of Indian archaeology during the last one hundred and fifty years on prehistory, protohistory and the ancient historical period up to AD 1000. But owing to a gap between its completion and publication it encompasses information available only up to 1978. (The ICHR plans to bring out a Supplement to this *Encyclopaedia* covering the archaeological discoveries made since 1978.) Despite the statement by B.K. Thapar in the Introduction<sup>65</sup> that Pakistan and Bangladesh have not been covered, it has not been possible to exclude the Indus Valley sites in Pakistan like Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, Amri and Kot Diji. It would have been still better if the Harappan material had been presented in the perspective of the Bronze Age Cultures of West Asia, Egypt and even Greece. The ICHR is similarly planning to bring out a Comprehensive Dictionary of Social, Economic and Administrative Terms in Indian/South Asian Inscriptions based on Historical Principles in six volumes. At the workshop held in Mysore from 25 to 27 August 1989 to

prepare the guidelines for the project it has been recommended that the area of inscriptions covered by the Dictionary should comprise India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan south of the Hindukush Mountains; and, wherever necessary, inscriptions outside this area may also be explored. This, in my view, is the correct approach. In view of the enormous pending work on the sources, textual, numismatic, inscriptional and archaeological, it may not be reasonable to assume that the contours of ancient Indian political history will not significantly change even if all the untapped sources are fully exploited.<sup>66</sup>

It is no doubt true that Epigraphy, Numismatics and Archaeology are becoming increasingly specialized disciplines. That is why in his General President's address to the Bombay session of the Indian History Congress, 1980, D.C. Sircar particularly deplored the decline in the knowledge of Epigraphy and Palaeography and bemoaned the dearth of people capable of reading and interpreting not only a lengthy *kavya* type inscription in Sanskrit and Prakrit but even a small epigraph in the early script.<sup>67</sup> The era in which a political historian was also a competent numismatist, epigraphist or archaeologist and *vice versa* is, I am afraid, passing, if it has not passed. Even so, a political historian can no longer afford to have a mastery of only the literary sources and will need to know and use more and more material from Epigraphy, Numismatics and Archaeology.<sup>68</sup> In his mimeographed article 'Prospects for the Study of Inscriptions on an all-India Scale' presented at the recent ICHR-sponsored seminar in Mysore, Thomas R. Trautmann affirmed that the character and function of the epigrapher and the character and function of the historian are inextricably intertwined by the inescapable importance of the inscriptional record; epigraphers must be historians and historians must, in some measure, be epigraphers.<sup>69</sup> The importance of historians being, in some measure, numismatists and archaeologists also cannot be overemphasized; similar links must be established by the political historian with disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology, Economics and Demography, if he is to present a fuller and more balanced picture of ancient Indian political history. If the debate initiated by Professor Goyal leads to a better appreciation of these wider contexts for the setting of political history among scholars of ancient India, I believe the debate would well have served its purpose.

#### NOTES

1. Until 1960 political history attracted the largest number of Indian scholars and most of them tended to glorify the histories of their respective regions under rulers of successive dynasties. In 1956 R.S. Sharma did not find 'any work exclusively devoted to the history of the social structure in ancient India', 'Historiography of the Ancient Indian Social Order', paper presented at the Conference to survey and evaluate South Asian Historiography held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. It appeared in C.H. Phillips, ed, *Historiography of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 102-14 (see p.102); and between 1938 and 1961 only twenty-five papers on early Indian economic history

were presented at the Indian History Congress sessions against three hundred on political and administrative history, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Essays in Ancient Indian Economic History* (New Delhi, 1987), Introduction, p.xvi. C.H. Philips, in fact, perceived 'undue emphasis' on political, administrative and constitutional history and relative neglect of economic, social and cultural history in the South Asian context, in Philips, ed, op.cit., Introduction, p.3.

Will and Ariel Durant consider it wrong to ignore the fact that the 'great man', the 'hero', the 'genius' grows out of his time and land, and is the product and symbol of events as well as their agent and voice; without some situation requiring a new response his new ideas would be untimely and impracticable, *The Lessons of History* (New York, 1968), p.34.

2. E.H. Carr does not find this a cause of worry. In his opinion the economic and social interpretations of the past represent a more advanced stage in history than the exclusively political interpretation, *What is History?* (London, 1961), p.118. Underscoring the enormous usefulness of economic explanation in political history, George H. Sabine points out that it has made the study of politics more realistic than was possible with the separation of politics from economics or with an almost wholly legalistic approach to politics, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd Indian reprint of 4th revised edn (New Delhi, 1973), p.709. According to R.S. Sharma, political history, instead of suffering due to a shift in favour of social and economic history, has been immensely enriched by insights provided by the latter, Inaugural address at the Golden Jubilee session of the Indian History Congress held at Gorakhpur University, p.5 of the mimeographed paper.
3. Establishing explanatory relationships between phenomena makes history an authentic discipline; in history causes cannot be assumed—they are to be looked for, stresses Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, tr. from the French by Peter Putnam, reprint (Manchester University Press, 1984; first published in 1954), pp.10, 197. The study of history is the study of causes, states E.H. Carr, op.cit., p.81; cf. pp.89–90, 114, 126. Irfan Habib insists that ultimately it is the historian's 'own assessment' of the more significant among the phenomena evidenced and of the factors that could have been present in a situation 'which is decisive in framing his description (out of real facts, of course)', *Interpreting Indian History* (the Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture delivered at the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, in 1985) (Shillong, n.d.), p.3.
4. The essence of history, according to Susobhan Sarkar, lies in the evolution of an entire people, a society rather than the individuals, *A Marxian Glimpse of History* (Delhi, 1975), p.5. It is more difficult but more profitable to pass moral judgments on institutions, events and policies of the past than on individuals, observes E.H. Carr, op.cit., p.72. G.R. Elton points out that political history will have to be more chary of ascribing things to personal action and surface motive and remember the society behind the individuals, *Political History: Principles and Practice* (New York and London, 1970), p.178. Benjamin I. Schwarz opines that political history involves conscious activity set within the framework of all the problems, pressures and constraints imposed by the objective situation and the political historian must welcome all the aid which economists, demographers, anthropologists and others can provide to help him to understand the situation within which political action takes place, 'A Brief Defense of Political and Intellectual History with particular reference to non-Western Cultures', *Diadulus* (Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts), Issue on 'Historical Studies Today' (Winter 1971), p.100. According to Maurice Aymard and Harbans Mukhia, political history has come to be seen as a play of more anonymous but infinitely more powerful forces which, owing to their magnitude, it does not control and perceives at best in a fragmentary manner, but which, in fact, determine its course or, at least, the limits within which it operates, Aymard and Mukhia, ed, *French Studies in History, Vol. I, The Inheritance* (Orient Longman, 1988), Introduction, p.6. To provide just one example of how the distinction between individuals and institutions cannot be ignored, the religion of a ruler, however powerful, never automatically became the religion of the ruled.
5. *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. VI, Nos 3–4 (The Hague), pp.177–202. It showed that Philology, History, Archaeology, Sociology and Anthropology have to be combined to get valid results in any of these fields. The article has been reprinted in *Science and Human Progress* (Prof. D.D. Kosambi Commemoration Volume) (Bombay, 1974), pp.1–27. In his review of D.D. Kosambi's *Myth and Reality: Studies in the*

- Formation of Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1962), in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXXIII, Pt 3 (New Haven, Connecticut, 1963), H. Goetz endorses Kosambi's combined philological-archaeological-ethnological approach for the study of India's past, p.375. Lucien Febvre, who founded with Marc Bloch the *Annales* in 1929 and to whom the latter dedicated his posthumously published *The Historian's Craft*; (its title in the French manuscript was *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien*, that is, *An Apology for History or The Historian's Craft*; Marc Bloch was executed without trial by a German firing squad on 16 June 1944), was an uncompromising foe of the 'spirit of specialization' and a staunch advocate of 'total history, without compartments'—'Down with all barriers and labels! At the frontiers, astride the frontiers, with one foot on each side, that is where the historian has to work, freely, usefully', he observed, 'A New Kind of History', *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Lucien Febvre*, tr. from the French by K. Folca, edited by Peter Burke (London, 1973), see p. 31 and Burke's Introduction, p. xli. With its ideal of total history, the *Annales* school produced many solid works, some of them brilliant, and a historiography in tune both with the contemporary preference for social and economic history and with innovations in methodology, remarks Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1983), pp.359, 371. Professor Goyal himself quotes Henri Pirenne, Herbert Butterfield, Benjamin Schwartz and Jacques Le Goff to support his view of an integrated approach.
6. B.K. Thapar, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India* (Paris and Tokyo, 1985), p.52.
  7. To take just one recent example, A.L. Basham's *The Wonder that was India* (London, 1954), though a general work, is not only an unprejudiced and sympathetic survey of the various facets of ancient Indian culture and civilization, it is also a substantial study of the social, economic and cultural processes in the light of political developments in the subcontinent.
  8. Fortunately R.C. Majumdar's lament that the end of British rule has led to a steady deterioration in that critical method of historical studies which we Indians learnt from our contact with the West during the last half of the nineteenth and first half of the present century, 'Indian Historiography: Some Recent Trends', in S.P. Sen, ed, *Historians and Historiography in Modern India* (Calcutta, 1973), p. xix, has no basis.
  9. Marc Bloch defines history as 'the science of men in time' and regards the 'total social situation' at a given moment of vital significance for understanding a historical phenomenon, op.cit., pp. 27, 34-35. For the historian everything begins and ends with time; time sticks to his thinking like soil to a gardener's spade, contends Fernand Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences: the *Longue Durée*' in Aymard and Mukhia, ed, op.cit., pp. 94-95. According to V.S. Pathak, history is a conceptual integration of past events in the framework of time and space and it requires a penetration into the mental recess of the historian, *Ancient Historians of India* (Bombay, 1966), p. 30.
  10. 'The Internalization of History', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (Washington, February 1989), pp. 1-10; cf. Aymard and Mukhia, ed, op.cit., Introduction, p. 2. As early as 1907 Acton had spoken of 'universal history' as 'distinct from the combined history of all countries', *Cambridge Modern History: Its Origin, Authorship and Production*, p. 14. To take only three more examples of the numerous such assertions, Arnold Toynbee was convinced that 'human affairs do not become intelligible until they are seen as a whole', E.W.F. Tomlin, ed., *Arnold Toynbee: A Selection from His Works* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 5; 'a panoramic view will at any rate be a less misleading reflexion of reality than a partial view', *A Study of History* (the new one-volume edn) (Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 46; Marc Bloch claimed that history is a whole and that no period and no topic can be understood except in relation to other periods and topics, op. cit., p.v; and for Fernand Braudel, all history is history of humankind and for a fuller understanding it must draw upon all disciplines that have a bearing on human existence, Aymard and Mukhia, ed, op. cit., Introductory Note to the section 'Continuity and Change in Historical Understanding', p. 31.
  11. By no means a Marxist himself, Niharranjan Ray described Indian Marxist contribution to historical research in India as 'a most creative force', 'Indian Historiography and Marxist Thought', in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Marxism and Indology* (Calcutta, 1981), p. 29.

12. The mode of production, in orthodox Marxist theory, shaped every aspect of human life, governed every change and was itself not influenced by anything outside of itself, as it supplied its own driving force, claims Ernst Breisach, *op. cit.*, p. 293. D.D. Kosambi, according to R.S. Sharma, blazed a new trail by making the first serious attempt to apply the theory of mode of production to the study of social, economic and other processes in ancient Indian history, *Origin of the State in India* (D.D. Kosambi Memorial Lectures, 1987) (University of Bombay, 1989), p. 1; cf. Draft of chapter II, 'Modern Historians of India', for the 3rd revised edn of *Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1977; 2nd edn, 1980). H. Goetz describes Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956) as 'revolutionary'. Review of Kosambi's *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXXIII, Pt 3, p. 373. Sharma is himself the foremost living Marxist historian of ancient India whose writings on political history trace the emergence of the ruling class and its role in the formation of the state.
- 12a. According to Jacques Le Goff, politics needs to be made a part of general history and however much political history may be renewed and regenerated by the other human sciences, it cannot aspire to autonomy. 'Is Politics the Backbone of History?', *Daedalus*, Issue on 'Historical Studies Today' (Winter 1971), p. 13.
13. Professor Goyal's criticism of these historians, however, cannot be regarded as entirely fair or well-deserved. They are not mere political historians and their writings include both political and non-political history. For example, R.G. Bhandarkar, 'the earliest important indigenous historian of ancient India', far more critical of his sources than many of his European counterparts, according to A.L. Basham, 'Modern Historians of India' in C.H. Philips, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 280-81, not only wrote *Early History of the Deccan* (1884) and *A Peep into the Early History of India* (1890) based on a thorough and critical analysis of all sources available till then, but also *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* (1973), his *magnum opus*, and did not ignore the impact of social, economic and religious aspects on political history, A.D. Pusalker's article, 'R.G. Bhandarkar' in S.P. Sen, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 41; cf. R.K. Majumdar and A.N. Srivastav, *Historiography* (Delhi, 1975), Pt V, p. 51. R.K. Mookerji, too, wrote, apart from the biographies of Candragupta Maurya, Asoka and Harsa and works on the Gupta Empire and Local Self-Government, books on Hindu Civilization, Education, Shipping and Maritime Activities, Land System and Art; and his comprehensive scholarship enlarged the canvas of his political history to include non-political elements. K.P. Jayaswal no doubt overplayed the role of indigenous ruling dynasties in overthrowing the yoke of the Sakas and the Kusanas in his *History of India c. 150-350 AD* (1933), but he effectively countered the notion that the period from the fall of the Kusanas to the rise of the Imperial Guptas was a Dark Age in Indian history. Similarly his most famous work, *Hindu Polity* (1924), exploded the myth of the prevalence of Oriental Despotism in India before the advent of the British and showed that Indians had for long enjoyed a measure of self-government, B.P. Sinha's Article, 'K.P. Jayaswal', in S.P. Sen, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1973), p. 237. Dasharatha Sharma's Agra University 1943 D. Litt. thesis 'Early Chauhan Dynasties' appeared in print in 1956 and B.P. Sinha's London University 1948 Ph.D. thesis, 'The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha (cir.455-1000 AD)', was published in 1953, when feudalism as a stage representing a structural change in the social and economic order in the Indian context was not a seriously debated issue. This term was being used, as B.D. Chattopadhyaya points out, as a synonym for political fragmentation and applied to any period in which no unitary empire could be located on the political horizon, 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective', Presidential address to the Ancient India section of the forty-fourth session of the Indian History Congress, Burdwan, 1983; see *Proceedings*, p.28. Damning their works for not adequately discussing feudalism is, therefore, hardly justified. That political history of the earlier scholars was not necessarily of an inferior type can be shown by the example of H.C. Raychaudhuri's *Political History of Ancient India from the Accession of Parikshit to the Extinction of the Gupta Empire* (University of Calcutta, 1923), which evoked the admiration of Indian and foreign scholars alike, A.L. Basham praising it in 1961 as the product of a 'first class mind', 'in so many respects . . . the most important work of ancient Indian history written in the last forty years', and for 'making original contribu-



- tions in almost every chapter', 'Modern Historians of Ancient India' in C.H. Phillips, ed., op.cit., p. 284.
14. Op.cit., pp. 66-67, 188.
  15. Op.cit., p. 22.
  16. Op.cit., pp. 7-8.
  17. Cf. Niharranjan Ray, op.cit., p. 31; D.P. Singhal, 'Battle for the Past', in D. Devahuti, ed., *Problems of Indian Historiography* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 165; N. Subrahmanian, *Historiography* (Madurai, 1973), pp. 122-23; B. Sheik Ali, *History: Its Theory and Method* (Macmillan, 1978), p. 261.
  18. *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVI, No. 12 (New Delhi, December 1988). This represents the text of the Second V.P. Chintan Memorial Lecture delivered at the Indian School of Social Sciences, Madras, in September 1988.
  19. Ibid., p. 4; cf. Irfan Habib, 'Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis', *Enquiry* (New Series), Vol. 3, No. 2 (Delhi, Monsoon 1969), p. 59. According to Jon Elster, on the other hand, the expressions 'historical materialism' and 'the materialist conception of history' were coined after Marx's death and they are somewhat misleading in suggesting a systematic, coherent body of doctrine, ed., *Karl Marx: A Reader* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 169; cf. *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 55. In his works dealing with the philosophy of social sciences, Jon Elster pinpoints inadequacies in Marxist theory and analysis; see, for example, his *Ulysses and Sirens: Studies in Rationality and Irrationality* (Cambridge University Press, 1979; revised edn, 1984), pp. 34-35, 96-102, 126; *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 142, 146-47, 164-66; *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 14 fn. In Fernand Braudel's opinion, Marx's genius, the secret of his long sway, lies in the fact that he was the first to construct true social models, on the basis of a historical *longue durée*; but the creative potential of this most powerful social analysis of the last century has been stymied because these models have been frozen and given the status of laws, of a preordained and automatic explanation valid in all places and to any society, 'History and Social Sciences: the *Longue Durée*', in Aymard and Mukhia, ed, op.cit., p. 98.
  20. Op.cit., p. 132. Necessity, Helmut Fleischer points out in the context of determinism, has two meanings—inevitability and urgent desirability: inevitability in the sense of sunset and sunrise would be Marxism 'at a vulgar level'; necessity is what must happen if disaster is to be averted and such is the necessity with which we are confronted in the field of history, *Marxism and History*, tr. from the German by Eric Mosbacher (London, 1973), p. 119. Sudipta Kaviraj cites Antonio Gramsci (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, p. 181) and Georg Lukács (*History and Class Consciousness*, London 1968, chapter on 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat') to emphasize that from the stage of growth of a social formation, the extent of coalescence of the economic corporate life of classes, it is possible to infer not the actions which must follow, but the range in which they are most likely to happen: the logic of determination is a logic of probability. And on the one hand the link between the objective possibility and actual occurrence of events depends on the intentional link; on the other history is largely unintended story or at least of intentions gone out of control: every unintended consequence must have as its obverse an intended occurrence that failed to happen, 'Some Observations on Marxism and Political Causality', Occasional Papers on 'Perspectives in Indian Development', Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, pp. 71, 80. According to Jorge Larrañe (*A Reconstruction of Historical Materialism*, London, 1986, pp. 123-24), 'social change is . . . neither arbitrary nor absolutely predetermined' and 'historical materialism rejects a unilinear conception which sketches', in the words of Marx and Engels, 'the general path of development prescribed by fate to all nations' (*Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975, p. 293). Aymard and Mukhia, too, note that Marxism has resiled from its earlier insistence on linear determinism and has sought to incorporate features of the 'superstructure' in its causal explanation, ed, op. cit., Introduction, p. 25.
  21. *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965), p. 12.
  22. Op. cit., p. 8.
  23. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 10. Though thorough in his application of historical materialism, Kosambi did so with commonsense and discretion, quite aware of the modifying effects of religious and philosophical ideas,

- contends H. Goetz, *Review of Kosambi's Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture in Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXXIII, Pt. 3, p. 374.
24. Editorial Note in *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, pp. 1-2.
  25. 'Problems of Marxist Historiography', *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, pp. 5-6.
  26. (London, 1936). According to Sabine, a society's forces of production must include not only raw materials but also technology which determines the effective use of raw materials and depends in part at least on skill and knowledge of science which belongs to the realm of consciousness or the superstructure. Similarly the ownership of tools or the accumulation of capital which may determine how raw materials are used or whether they are used at all is governed by legal institutions which form part of the superstructure. Drawing a line between mind and matter in the realm of human behaviour, which encompasses economic relations, is neither possible nor useful; and it being almost impossible to distinguish the superstructure from the base clearly and completely, Marx's distinction of the two was evidently not empirical, op.cit., pp. 700, 709. It is very difficult to conceive of any system of production relations abstracted from culture, law and politics, that is, elements of the so-called superstructure, stresses E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters* (Penguin, 1977), p. 261. After all, Marx's rigorous separation and primacy of the economic domain was a construct of bourgeois society and ideology; and it is an 'emasculated' Marxist historiography which is content only with the narrowly 'economic' or the 'political', points out Sumit Sarkar, 'Social History: Predicaments and Possibilities', Presidential address to the Modern India section of the Annamalai Nagar session of the Indian History Congress, 1984, p. 17.
  - 26a. One of the more remarkable features of Marx's work is the coexistence in it of Hegelian thinking and elements of analytical social science, points out Jon Elster, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, p. 1. In David McLellan's opinion, Marx's ideas were based on a synthesis of German idealist philosophy, French political theory and English classical economics, 'Marx and Engels on the Future Communist Society', in John P. Burke, Lawrence Crocker and Lyman H. Legters, ed., *Marxism and the Good Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 106. To Marx and Engels, as to Hegel, dialectic provided a clue to the discovery of a necessary evolution in history, though they substituted a materialist for an idealist version, observes Sabine, op. cit., pp. 701-2. It was under Hegel's inspiration that Marx built a historical theory on a grand scale—a theory which was presumed to not only explain all history but also deliver the tools for eventual human redemption from all injustice, asserts Ernst Breisach, op. cit., pp. 270, 293; cf. Louis Althusser, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx*, tr. from the French by Ben Brewster (London, 1972), p. 161. Marx's radical definition of proletariat as a 'class in chains', 'a class of bourgeois society which is at the same time not a class within bourgeois society' due to 'the injustice being committed purely and simply against that class' was not derived from empirical observations, but 'was rooted in his philosophical endeavour and in his critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, though his aims transcended philosophy', maintains Werner Conze, 'From 'Pöbel' to 'Proletariat': The Socio-Historical Preconditions of Socialism in Germany', in Georg Iggers, ed, *The Social History of Politics: Critical Perspectives in West German Historical Writing since 1945* (Heidelberg, 1985), p. 60.
  27. 'Problems of Social Formations in Early India', General President's address to the Aligarh session of the Indian History Congress, 1973, p. 2.
  28. (Bombay, 1949).
  29. Kosambi notes 'fundamental errors of fact and of reasoning' and 'atrocious misstatements on almost every page' of this 'painfully disappointing book' and comments, 'Marxism is not a substitute for thinking', *Review in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. XXIX (Poona, 1949), pp. 271-77. According to him, Indian history does not fit precisely into any rigid framework postulating a unilinear development, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, p. 23. Kosambi's view is in substance hardly dissimilar from the eminent non-Marxist historian A.L. Basham's observation that the grandiose pattern of history which Marx and Engels constructed does not conform to the actual facts of Indian or even Asian history, 'A New Interpretation of Indian History', *Review of Kosambi's An Introduction to the Study of Indian History in Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. I, Pt 3 (Leiden, 1958), pp. 334, 347, or Daniel H.H. Ingalls' opinion that Dange's work compounds ignorance with misstatement of

- fact, Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXVII, Pt 3 (1957), p. 220.
30. Irfan Habib sees no reason to believe that Primitive Communism-Slavery-Feudalism was the standard path of the development of class societies in most of the countries before the rise of Capitalism, maintains that the materialist conception of history need not necessarily prescribe a set universal periodization and regards Dange's work as 'fantastic', 'Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis', *Science and Human Progress* (Prof. D.D. Kosambi Commemoration Volume), pp. 41, 44-45. He points out that Negro slavery in the United States grew on the foundations of Capitalism and endorses E.J. Hobsbawm's view (Introduction to Marx and Engels, *Precapitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, Moscow, 1979, pp. 19-20) that 'the general theory of historical materialism requires only that there should be a succession of modes of production, though not necessarily any particular modes, and perhaps not in any particular predetermined order', 'Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis', *Enquiry* (New Series), Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 61, 65.
  31. R.S. Sharma discerns 'more enthusiasm than scholarship' in this book, 'Historiography of the Ancient Indian Social Order' in C.H. Philips, ed., op. cit., p. 114.
  32. (Berlin, 1954).
  33. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 10. Kosambi argues that production and exchange in a slave society remain in the hands of those who own the slaves and the place of the slave whose surplus product could be appropriated was taken over by the members of the sudra varna in older days, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, pp. 11, 23-24.
  34. *Slavery in Ancient India as Depicted in Pali and Sanskrit Texts* (New Delhi, 1960), pp. 106-10. According to A.L. Basham, too, there is no period in which Indian economy depended upon large-scale chattel slavery and even the substantial increase in the number of slaves during the reign of Firuz Tughlaq (1351-88) had slight economic effects, 'A New Interpretation of Indian History', Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. I, Pt 3, pp. 334, 341.
  35. *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* (New Delhi, 1983), pp. 108-9.
  36. *Sudras in Ancient India*, 2nd edn (Delhi, 1980), pp. 316, 320.
  37. *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, p. 26.
  38. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 275. The twin categories of 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' occur frequently in this work, cf. pp. 267-68, 270-71, 282, 284, 288, 298, 303, 328, 334-35, 340, 343-44, 347, 367. Kosambi finds a proto-feudal system in the *Manusmriti*, *ibid.*, p. 241. The chronological range of feudalism, according to him, roughly extends over a period of a millennium and a half, though he does not identify the dates of its beginning or end precisely. Thus he points out that officers had not acquired feudal rights and powers about AD 400 and the transfer of rights of the state to the recipients of land grants meant only receipt of fixed tribute but no proprietary or ownership rights, *ibid.*, p. 279; and 'feudalism from above' hardened—not began—from the sixth century onwards, *ibid.*, p. 271. According to Kosambi, feudalism broke down in the middle of the seventeenth century under Aurangzeb, *ibid.*, p. 362; however, he refers to the East India Company taking over feudal rights in Bengal after Clive's victory at Plassey in 1757 and also to the last upsurge of feudalism in the 1857 Mutiny, *ibid.*, p. 370. Kosambi is much more definite about and pinpoints the end of 'feudalism from above' in the fourteenth century—in the reigns of Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316) and Firuz Tughlaq (1351-88), *ibid.*, pp. 344, 347.
  39. According to Irfan Habib, using the term 'feudalism' for a period of some fourteen hundred years involves the risk of glossing over important social changes occurring during it and also that of the features of the medieval Indian class structure being misinterpreted by introducing generalizations obtained from a study of European feudalism; Kosambi's 'feudalism from above' is not a mode of production at all and is therefore a non-Marxist category; and his two-stage division of the feudal period into 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' is not only theoretically inadequate for representing a stage of social evolution but is also not borne out by a detailed study of the medieval Indian society, 'Marxist Interpretation', *Seminar*, No. 39, *Past and Present: A Symposium on the Attitudes and Approaches to A Study of Our History* (New Delhi, November 1962), pp. 36-37. In his opinion, while

- secular land grants were a device for the dispersal of power, these cannot by themselves be regarded as the key causative element in Indian feudalism; these were rather a consequence of it, *Interpreting Indian History*, p. 25.
40. R.S. Sharma does not accept Kosambi's hypothesis that a landowning class above the peasantry did not come into existence until the later centuries of the first millennium AD. According to V.K. Thakur, the main contribution to the study of Indian feudalism has been made by the Marxist historians, *Historiography of Indian Feudalism: Towards A Model of Early Indian Economy c. AD 600-1000* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 1.
  41. D.H.H. Ingalls doubts whether 'feudalism from above' existed in India without an accompaniment of petty village landlords; finds 'feudalism from below' far more applicable to the Rajputs than to the Muslims; and refers to Kosambi's acknowledgement of the fact that Alauddin Khilji's rule in any case did not represent 'feudalism from below', Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXVII, Pt 3, p. 226. Basham, on the other hand, finds Kosambi's hypothesis of 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' particularly original and rewarding, 'A New Interpretation of Indian History', Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. I, Pt 3, p. 346.
  42. (University of Calcutta, 1965; 2nd revised and enlarged edn, Delhi, 1980); cf. 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?', *Social Scientist* (Marx Centenary Number, 3, February 1984), pp. 16-41; reprinted in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. XII, Nos 2 and 3 (London, January and April 1985), pp. 19-43. Sharma's position has been vigorously supported and reinforced, among others, by B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century* (Allahabad, 1973) and 'The Problem of the Emergence of Feudal Relations in Early India', Presidential address to the Ancient India section of the Bombay session of the Indian History Congress, 1980; R.N. Nandi, 'Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India', Presidential address to the Ancient India section of the Annamalai Nagar session of the Indian History Congress, 1984; and D.N. Jha, 'Early Indian Feudalism: A Historiographical Critique', Presidential address to the Ancient India section of the Waltair session of the Indian History Congress, 1979.
  43. *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphic Records* (Lucknow, 1969).
  44. 'Was there Feudalism in Indian History?', Presidential address to the Medieval India section of the Waltair session of the Indian History Congress, 1979. Though B.D. Chattopadhyaya does not go that far, admits that the system of assignments of land brought in important changes in agrarian relations in areas where such assignments were made and accepts the *samanta*-feudatory system as the hallmark of the structure of polity in early medieval India, he doubts if the use of land grant evidence for explaining the genesis of feudal polity in pre-Gupta and Gupta times is quite tenable, 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective', op. cit., pp. 30-31.
  45. In his article 'Classifying Pre-Colonial India', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. XII, Nos 2 and 3, pp. 44-53, Irfan Habib refers to Marx's rejection towards the end of his life of M.M. Kovalevsky's categorization of Indian property relations as feudal (p. 45) and without firmly rejecting the notion of 'Indian feudalism' (p. 50) expresses his own preference for a somewhat 'negative, descriptive category'—the 'medieval Indian system' (p. 49). In his more recent article, 'Problems of Marxist Historiography', *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, Irfan Habib rejects feudalism as a universal pre-capitalist system even though this would imply a multiplicity of social formations over different territories; he finds this in consonance with the Marxist theory of uneven development and Marx's view of complex social structures preceding Capitalism, the first universal mode of production (p. 6).
  46. Vivekanand Jha, 'Social Content of the *Bhagavadgita*', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. XI, Nos 1-2 (July 1984 and January 1985), pp. 37-42.
  47. Op. cit., pp. 147-48.
  48. Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXVII, Pt 3, p. 221. A slightly modified formulation is that by the American anthropologist Julian Steward, 'Theories are not destroyed by facts—they are replaced by new theories which better explain the facts', *Theory of Culture Change* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1944), p. 209.

49. 'Problems of Marxist Historiography', *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, p. 3. Perry Anderson has no doubt that historical materialism is not a finished science. Marx and Engels themselves can never be taken simply at their word; the errors of their writings on the past should not be evaded or ignored, but identified and criticized. To do so is not to depart from historical materialism, but to rejoin it and pursue a Marxist historical enquiry rigorously, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London, 1974), p. 9. Eric J. Hobsbawm, too, states that the continuity of Marxism since the days of Marx and Engels is substantially unbroken, Marxism is a living body of thought and the history of Marxism is not concluded, Hobsbawm, ed, *The History of Marxism*, Volume one: *Marxism in Marx's Day* (London, 1982), p. viii.
50. L.B. Alayev, 'Historical Path of the Orient', pp. 1-2; L.V. Danilova, 'The State and the Alternation of Modes of Production in Russian History', p. 1. In Paul Buhle's opinion, Marxism in its original forms has been tested in the United States and 'the old universals proven insufficient', *Marxism in the USA from 1870 to the Present Day* (London, 1987), Preface, p. 6.
51. L.V. Danilova, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
52. M.M. Elkanidje, 'A New Approach in the Soviet Studies of Socio-Economic Formations', p. 12.
53. L.B. Alayev, op. cit., p. 8.
54. G.A. Melikishvili, 'Concept of Social and Economic Formation and Two Main Types of Class Societies', p. 6; M.M. Elkanidje, op. cit., p. 12.
55. L.B. Alayev, op. cit., p. 4.
56. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vols I-III, 4th reprint (Moscow, 1977): see Vol. I, pp. 41, 92-94, 127, 149, 179; Vol. II, pp. 19, 245, 285, 378-79; Vol. III, pp. 34-35, 146-47, 330; cf. David McLellan, ed, *Marx: the First 100 Years* (Fontana Paperback, 1983), pp. 157-58; Jorge Larraín, *Marxism and Ideology* (Macmillan, 1983), p. 230.
57. In Paul M. Sweezy's opinion, the state as a special apparatus of repression will, according to Marxist theory, continue as long as Capitalism exists on an international scale and the world bourgeoisie continues to support the counter-revolutionary ambitions of the overthrown classes', 'Theory and Practice in the Mao Period', in Burke, Crocker and Legters, ed, *Marxism and the Good Society*, p. 217. The abolition of the state altogether remains, a century after the prediction, one of the goals of revolutionary socialism, states Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1979), Foreword, p. 11. According to Jorge Larraín, the very fact that for many people the classless society is a consciously pursued goal indicates that the conditions for its practical realization are already present, op. cit., p. 223. On the other hand, a more critical view, underscoring its utopian element, is that, as D.H.H. Ingalls points out, the materialist Marxists' passionate belief in the non-materialist ideal of progress and perfectibility of man through classlessness looks odd, Review of Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXVII, Pt 3, p. 227, or, as Jon Elster explains, it was only by denying or ignoring important features of human nature that Marx was able to set up a stark contrast between individual fulfilment in class societies and in Communism, *Making Sense of Marx*, p. 92, or, as Sabine underlines, the classless society is the 'myth of the future', future being the one thing that never arrives, op. cit., p. 717.
58. A revolutionary upsurge is indeed sweeping the Socialist world profoundly disturbed by distortions—even crises—in economies and the erosion of political democracy and individual freedom and initiatives by a state concentrating all property and power in its hands and, in the prophetic words of Jawaharlal Nehru, 'not itself belonging to the people', A.I. Chicherov, 'Through the Glasnost Looking Glass', *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 14 November 1989, p. xi. And we have the spectacle of a Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Communist Party and state chief, providing leadership and a crucial impetus to wide-ranging changes in polity, economy and society aimed at safeguarding the gains of socialism, giving it a human face and buttressing it with structural reforms and democratic freedom.

The state not being autonomous from the socio-economic structure of a class-divided society, Marx in fact puts politics at the centre of social practice for our times, points out Randhir Singh, 'Politics—the Dialectics of Science and Revolution in Karl Marx' in Krishna Bhardwaj and Sudipta Kaviraj, ed, *Perspectives on Capitalism: Marx, Keynes, Schumpeter and Weber* (ICSSR, New Delhi, 1989), p. 178. According to Perry Anderson, secular struggle between classes is ultimately

- resolved at the *political*—not at the economic or cultural—level of society, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p. 11. Jon Elster, too, maintains, 'Everything Marx wrote was intended to serve the Communist revolution—directly or indirectly, proximately or ultimately, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, p. 257.
59. A few examples taken at random from a large number of publications on ancient Indian political history by Marxist historians are R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, 2nd edn (Delhi, 1968); *Origin of the State in India*, op. cit.; 'Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in Pre-Maurya Times', *Social Science Probings*, Vol. I, No. 1 (March 1984), pp. 1-32; 'Stages in State Formation in Ancient India', *ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 1 (March 1985), pp. 1-19; 'From Gopati to Bhupati (A Review of the Changing Position of the King)', *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 2 (New Delhi, July-December 1980); Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford University Press, 1963); *From Lineage to State: Social Formation in the Mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley* (Oxford University Press, 1984); *The Mauryas Revisited* (S.G. Deuskar Lectures on Indian History, 1984) (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987); 'State Formation in Early India', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (Issue on State) (UNESCO, Paris, 1982), pp. 655-69; 'The Evolution of the State in the Ganges Valley in the mid-First Millennium BC', *Studies in History*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (Issue on State) (July-December 1982), pp. 181-96 (see also Introduction to this issue by R. Champakalakshmi, pp. 161-66); R.N. Nandi, 'Feudalization of the State in Early Medieval South India', *Social Science Probings*, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 32-59; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective', op. cit., and numerous other scholarly articles. In fact one finds a much better explanation of the rise and formation of the first large states in early India in some Marxist writings than elsewhere, R.S. Sharma's Inaugural address at the Golden Jubilee session of the the Indian History Congress held at Gorakhpur University, p. 5 of the mimeographed paper.
  60. Since knowledge or insight is not the monopoly of either Marxists or non-Marxists and neither of the two can claim infallibility of any sort, self-criticism and mutual cooperation will benefit both and the discipline of history itself, pleaded Irfan Habib nearly three decades back, 'Marxist Interpretation', *Seminar*, No. 39, p. 38.
  61. (Delhi, 1963).
  62. pp. 3, 6.
  63. p. 15.
  64. p. 4. There is no other discipline in which the natural and social sciences mingle as freely and intimately as in Archaeology, observes D.P. Agrawal, 'No Stone Unturned', Article in *The Times of India*, 21 January 1990, p. 2 of the Sunday Review section. 'The shift in prehistoric archaeology is from talk of artifacts to talk of societies, and from objects to relationships among different classes of data', holds Colin Renfrew, *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe* (Penguin, 1976; first published in 1973), p. 277.
  65. p. xv.
  66. After all, as recently as in the year 1972, A.K. Warder complained of 'inadequate political histories', *An Introduction to Indian Historiography* (Bombay), p. 5.
  67. pp. 8-9.
  68. E.H. Carr speaks of Archaeology, Epigraphy and Numismatics as the 'auxiliary sciences' of history which provide raw material for the historian, op. cit., p. 5; and it is not without reason that the Indian History Congress has 'Epigraphy, Historical Archaeology and Numismatics' as one of its five sections. A.L. Basham pinpoints credulity towards the literary sources as the most serious danger to sound scholarship in the study of ancient India and recommends a more critical approach to sources and increased recourse to Archaeology for greater certainty regarding the past events, 'Modern Historians of Ancient India' in C.H. Phillips, ed., op. cit., pp. 291-93.
  69. p. 2.

## *Spatial Spread of Multinational Corporations in Developing Countries and Some Related Aspects*

### INTRODUCTION

The recent decade has been seen fundamental changes in the world economy and the process of economic development of regions. These changes are associated with the new international economic order and the extensive spatial spread of international capital leading to considerable restructuration of the economy in different parts of the world. These have posed a major challenge to researchers in social sciences in understanding the organisation and reorganisation of the space and economy in the present era.

The structure of relations between countries and inflow of international capital is interpreted in traditional economic analysis as basically one involving a harmony of interests. It is viewed that mutual benefits can arise from the promotion of new economic activities induced by the flow of factors of production, goods and services across national boundaries.

Different conclusions are reached if economic analysis objectively focuses on imperfect world markets, distortions induced by government policies, concentration of resources and unequal exchange between and within the countries. It can also take into consideration the effects of international capital on the political composition and development objectives of the host economies, the resulting income distribution and the resultant uneven development in economy and space, inducement of particular consumption patterns and the displacement of domestically controlled economic activities allied with the limits put on economic and political self reliance.

In the post war era two phases of direct investment activity were distinguished. During the '50s and '60s the expanded presence and politico-economic power of the United States in the world scene led to an increase of U.S. private investment in areas that were almost exclusively under European or Japanese influences. By the late '60s and early '70s with the recovery from the war and expansion of economies,

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Bombay, Bombay.

inroads were again made by the former powers in some dominant U.S. areas. In the seventies and eighties this trend became further strengthened simultaneously matched with a deeper penetration of the U.S. capital in many underdeveloped countries.

It has been contended by many social scientists<sup>1</sup> that the origin of underdevelopment of the less developed countries, especially the ex-colonies, lies in the imperialist domination and the nature of their present relation with the developed nations; that capitalist system is prevailing over in an integrated manner, disregarding the nation-state boundaries. In this integrated system the less developed countries act primarily as assembly points and markets and secondarily as manufacturing sites of the core countries even at the cost of losing hold over their own resources; while developed countries act as the core manufacturing and decision making centres.

In the late 20th century i.e. the period of decolonisation, the principal instrument of this world capitalist integration has been the international capitalist organisations. Among them multinational corporations are leading so far as internationalisation of economy is concerned.

#### SPATIAL SPREAD OF MNCs

The development of multinational corporations is often regarded<sup>2</sup> as part of a natural progression in the evolution of enterprise structures in markets and mixed economies that relates to the major advances which occurred in the fields of technology, marketing organisation and the nature of oligopolistic competition.

The intimate links between science and technology necessitated international operation and intricate association of different branches of knowledge. This was balanced with a massive, large-scale production which again intensified competition. The development of monopolies ultimately pushed out the upper and middle level industrialists from operation and their entire network or the innumerable diverse subsidiaries started being controlled by a few conglomerates ranging from activities of research and processing of raw material right up to manufacturing and marketing of the finished products. These corporations<sup>3</sup> essentially keep their headquarters in one country and build factories, manufacture and sell products simultaneously in different countries.<sup>4</sup> They not only make direct investment in the host countries but also enter into collaboration with the governments of the latter or private firms therein or supply or transfer technology or goods in exchange of licensing fees and royalties. Thus a distinction arose between foreign direct investment and MNCs.

In the broad sense MNCs cover all enterprises with control over assets, factories, mines, sales office and like in two or more countries and are also responsible for most direct investment. Further, MNCs are not limited to by the function of investment.<sup>5</sup> Dunning<sup>6</sup> argues that besides investing capital, MNCs organise all the resources under them for promoting activities like transfer of technology, goods, managerial



services, entrepreneurship and related business practices including marketing restrictions. Vernon<sup>7</sup> puts stress on their extraordinary size, high profitability, heavy use of skilled manpower, huge expenditure on advertisement and research.

In 1950 most of the present multinational firms were barely of their present size. By the '70s this situation changed dramatically and multinationals, besides becoming larger, increasingly spread a well-organised global subsidiary network. To have a presence in most parts of the world now meant that these corporations could not just follow the spatial growth policy of 1950-70 of spreading subsidiaries from known areas to less known areas. This initial consideration started losing importance and with the established global network of subsidiaries now the most profitable location became the primary criterion of spatial spread and policy. The prospects of high profits lured them to search and explore its net in ever-widening circles across the world but with a suave background policy, intimately enmeshing every country and region within the circulation process of capital. By 1970's American, Japanese and West European multinationals became the bulwark of the international capital with their subsidiaries spread all over the world.

With the factor of spatial extension, two more factors can be added that worked towards the stability of these global corporations and their further growth in scale. Firstly, the large multinationals began to manage their environment in more sophisticated ways because of advancement in technology and diffusion measures. The latter made information centralised and control decentralised. The chief indication of this new sophistication was the growth of grid form of organisation based on matrix management techniques that spread first through U.S. and Dutch multinationals and later to others. Secondly, the multinational corporations became more and more financially oriented leading to the development of international money markets and large scale cross-country money transfer in which the corporates act as autonomous bodies.

These two new developments resulted in an acceleration in the movement of capital and consequently individual corporations became more able to move resources from one location to another through the medium of acquisition. It was actually a process of restructuration of world economic space into more regionally based zones of production dependent on a dominant regional power and in which resources, labour and capital are brought together in varying combinations at the most optimally profitable locations.

However, this does not mean that the movement of this new kind of capital only had unilateral flow from the developed countries to the underdeveloped countries. The flow was also directed between and among the developed nations, particularly towards the lucrative markets. Thus large amount of Japanese investment along with the European multinationals moved into the U.S.A. But the most profitable

employment of this capital seemed to be found increasingly, at least in terms of labour-intensive production processes, in the less developed countries that further led to a two-way crisis. On the one hand, growing rate of unemployment in many core countries associated with a local 'de-industrialisation' became significant while on the other, the uneven development pattern of the less developed host countries got aggravated further due to the spatial spread of MNCs.

#### OPERATIONS OF THE MULTINATIONALS: SPACE AND SECTOR

The multinational corporations, due to their enormous control and power to plan economic activity at very large spatial and sectoral scale, can enjoy some geographical advantages. Through their propensity to operate everywhere, they also have the power to destroy the possibility of national seclusion and self-sufficiency creating in the process a universal independence. In effect, they create hierarchy rather than equality and spread the benefits unevenly in the absence of any commitment or loyalty to the alien labour force and resources. It has already been argued that the increasing integration of the world economy would tend to heighten the economic, political and cultural subordination of the poor countries to the rich; further within the boundaries of the former, it would tend to aggravate rather than diminish regional equalities.

The old international division of labour based upon the exchange of raw materials by underdeveloped countries for core manufactured goods is now being transformed to a system of relocation of manufacturing, mainly of labour intensive production processes to less developed countries where labour is cheaper and plentiful. However, the process should not be looked at as a crude reaction to cheap labour costs and more tractable workers of the periphery or new developments in transport and communications-effectively it is a response to a combined set of factors that are more complex. The global character of these corporations with an integrated horizontal and vertical spadework of subsidiaries of various grades in different countries and regions as well as of different sectors of economic activities have enabled them to select locations for particular production processes and react to the prevailing political and fiscal conditions faster and more efficiently in a continuous process of locational rationalisation that causes the fixed capital to be checked frequently against more profitable employment of capital elsewhere. Because of their size and especially, for their accumulation of productive knowledge, they can demonstrate comparative advantages including the ability to attract and deploy high-calibre personnel, world-wide procurement facilities and marketing networks and a power to obtain larger quantities of capital and immediate access to the parent company's accumulated and continually expanding store of research and developments.<sup>8</sup>

The application of centralised control in decision making also enables these enterprises to operate as major non-market forces in the

world economy. This stems from their ability to shape the demand facing their products and to influence the economic environments to get tuned to the products through planning and exercise of power. It also occurs to their increasing share in world trade and production by which they can exchange products with affiliated firms, bypassing direct market considerations, in the process.

Thus the division of operation is not merely functional or occupational but also geographical. The occupational aspect gets expressed in the decentralisation of divisions, each concerned with one product line and tied up with respective head offices. The geographical aspect holds together the entire network of operation through a systematic locational dynamics.

This spatio-sectoral operation taking place at an international scale has developed a profound impact on space and spatial development of the host countries. The three levels of activities of the MNCs as suggested by Chandler and Redlich<sup>9</sup> are interlinked with this spatial framework. Level III (the lowest level) managing the day to day operations; Level II which arises as a consequence of the separation of the field office from the head office responsible for the co-ordination of the regional management and Level I consisting of the top management with the power of goal determination and planning. Level III activities would spread over the globe according to the pull of manpower, markets and raw materials. Level II activities, because of their need for white collar workers, communication systems and information network, would tend to concentrate in large cities of the host countries. Level II activities will thus be far more geographically concentrated than Level III activities. Level I is concentrated in core areas as it is more adjacent to the capital markets. People working at this level would culturally and ethnically be homogenous to a great extent. They are looking after the ultimate return with a common bond.

Applying this scheme, the highest offices of the multinational corporations would be found located in the largest cities of the parent countries with Level I activities. The largest cities in the host countries in the underdeveloped world would be entrusted with Level II activities together with Level III, at times, if other locational factors satisfy; and Level III activities would be seen to be geographically more mobile, at times, located at interior centres of the host countries with facilities of spatial extension and cheap labour along with some basic infrastructure offered by the respective regional governments in anticipation of some reinvestment. Since business is concentrated in the core city, geographic specialisation would come to reflect the hierarchy of corporate decision making and the occupational distribution of labour would depend on its functional placement in the international hierarchical economic system. The structure of income and consumption would also tend to parallel the structure of status and authority and there will emerge a sharp contrast between the growth rates of core and peripheral cities of the host countries leading to uneven spatial devel-

opment. In third world countries Level II and Level III activities are highly influenced by international demonstration effect and it becomes evident that it is not the technology itself but the organisation that leads to inequality. As in the past the colonial system linked each point of hinterland countries to the port/export enclaves inhibiting lateral communication and preventing the growth of independent centres of decision making or control, similarly multinational corporations in the present day centralise control according to the existing hierarchical pattern of the underdeveloped host countries and thus aggravate the core-periphery hiatus on the already distorted economic space of the erstwhile colonies leading to extreme primacy in the urban systems and unequal spatial development.

### RELATED ASPECTS

The objective imperatives of rapid industrial developments in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin American centre round (i) overcoming economic backwardness inherited from the colonial past and also (ii) solving the major problems of socio-economic transformation in removing poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and epidemic diseases. It is in the process of achieving these basic goals that these countries, already a part of the integrated world economy, come face to face with the multinational corporations.<sup>10</sup>

In 1977, the Tinbergen Report revealed that the MNCs take out between 50-100 billion dollars every year from the developing countries and the Manila conference of the UNCATD in 1979 estimated the annual debt service of the developing countries to be one fourth of their total export earnings. Not only the economies of most of the developing countries are manipulated by the MNCs, the latter have also got a firm control over their raw materials, transport and marketing sectors. In 1979 the Second World Development Report of the World Bank also revealed that the dominance of MNCs in the less developed countries has got a detrimental effect on their structural development. The flow of capital from the metropolitan countries to the less developed ones has been increasing and private capital exports had grown fourfold during 1970-77.

Among the many links between the erstwhile colonies and their colonisers, the one in the form of MNCs thus became very strong. In order to expand their business they provide financial support to political parties and thereby exercise influence on the government where they work. Their power thus does not get restricted only to economic spheres, it also takes a political overtone. In this process they are also provided support by the parent countries in economic and extra-economic terms. Thus the MNCs effect the economic, social and the political processes of the host countries and the decision making apparatus. Consequently the organisation of space-economy of the poor host countries also becomes an aspect of their control.

Regarding the impact of the MNCs in the developing countries, some vital questions may arise:

- i) The form which their investment takes in its nature of transformation and unequal competition with domestic enterprises.
- ii) Spatial spread of these corporations in the host countries and the consequences in the latter's spatial development-whether it reduces or aggravates regional disparity.
- iii) Relation of the MNCs with the governments of the host countries in economic, political and cultural perspectives.
- iv) The transformation of national and regional labour markets through spatio-sectoral processes like migration, diffusion of skill and the scale and nature of employment for the larger labour force.
- v) Simultaneous cultural transformation in the consumers' goods market, mass consumption and associated change in family life and motivations.

Some significant spatial configurations associated with the location of MNCs in developing countries can be noted here. Looking back, the development of world capitalism and the corresponding system of organisation of centre and periphery was divided into mercantile industrial and imperialist monopoly stages. Relations between centre and periphery played vital role in the growth of capitalism in all three stages. In the recent years, the foreign investments and collaborations made possible changes in specialisation towards goods produced by modern capitalist enterprise with a high productivity in developing countries and it is in these modern sectors that the expressions of capitalism get established. This mode, dominating the social formations of the periphery, has been termed 'peripheral capitalism' by Amin.<sup>11</sup> There is a fundamental difference, according to him, between the model of self-reliant accumulation at the Centre and the extraversion in the periphery and, therefore, he rejects a linear theory of stages of development for the developing countries. In the present crisis of the new international economic order there is a rise in the real price of raw materials exported by the periphery which could have financed a new stage of industrialisation. However, according to Amin, this has not led to mature capitalist formations but to a new form of unequal exchange between developed and less developed countries. "The new division of labour would be based on export by the periphery of cheap manufactured goods i.e. goods for which advantages of low wages make it possible to raise the profit in the world system. World wide accrual of profit would thus modify prices and ultimately conceal the extra transfer of value from the periphery to the centre, i.e. unequal exchange would perpetuate. It would also perpetuate the distorted pattern of demand in the peripheries to the detriment of mass consumption. The development of world system, therefore, would remain fundamentally unequal and external demand remain the main motive force."<sup>12</sup>

Internally, in the less-developed countries it would perpetuate agricultural backwardness continuing to base industrial accumulation on extortions from rural areas in real terms (rural-urban migration) and financial terms (heavy taxation, unfavourable internal terms of trade, etc). It is actually the expression of internationalisation of the main social relations of capitalism where industrial production for the world market gets selectively 'diffused' into certain regions. It produces a hierarchical division of labour between the firms.

During the post-independence era when India lacked required capital and technology for rapid industrialisation, the Government of India, through an Industrial Policy Act of 1948, acknowledged the need for flow of foreign capital. Although the major ownership and effective control was to remain in Indian hands, there was no hard and fast rule. During late fifties minority foreign capital increasingly gained importance and foreign enterprises were permitted with equity participation to meet the foreign exchange component for import of machinery and equipment.<sup>13</sup> As the country progressed in the field of technology, the government's approach towards foreign investment and collaboration became increasingly selective and in late sixties the government recommended a liberal approach towards foreign collaboration in substantially export oriented industries. Later in 1970 through the Modified Industrial Licensing Policy the government further liberalised its policy to bridge the technological gap and foreign collaboration in trading was also allowed. During mid seventies the government's policy towards foreign multinationals allowed the latter's entrance as foreign collaborations in areas where the import of foreign technology was imperative.<sup>14</sup> Several rules were framed not marked, however, by rigidity. Since early eighties policy towards MNCs has become extremely liberal. Multinationals now work in India either through a (i) branch or an (ii) Indian subsidiary. The subsidiaries, on the other hand, function either through

- i) collaboration with other subsidiaries, or
- ii) collaboration with local capital, or
- iii) participation in technical collaboration.

Multinational corporations in India claim that their entering the Indian economy has helped the host country in many ways as they act as carriers of advanced foreign technology, capital, new management and, therefore, economic modernisation. They claim that they increase employment in different regions, establish social welfare institutions and provide education, training and health facilities to the concerned people and hence expedite socio-cultural transformation.

While a group of social scientists support these claims, there is another group drawn from various disciplines who critically look into the aspect and argue that MNCs in India have actually made the whole process of industrialisation in the country subservient to international capital bringing in its wake a challenge to the national sovereignty, erosion of indigenous culture associated with a brain drain



and negative impact on political process and the public policy. All these economic and cultural consequences have spatial implications giving rise to rural-urban migration or uneven spatial dynamics of international capital in less developed countries have shown how the pre-capitalist mode of production exists along with the capitalist mode in the social formations also. This domestic quasi-mode<sup>15</sup> that also has spatial expressions, is never positively affected by the 'so-called' modernisation of the production sector and continues to act as an auxiliary to the capitalist modes. This fundamental polarisation of the spatio-sectoral structure helps the spatial spread of multinationals in these countries. Thus the branch circuits of MNCs as a form of economic organisation are based not only on international division but also on regional division of labour. This in turn is again based on the fundamental core-periphery polarisation of economic space into regions of self-centred accumulation and extraverted accumulation.

Geographical mobility of capital is also associated with the changing character of market and competition of sites in terms of profit maximisation. It would be in the monopolies' interest to follow evolution of newer markets and constantly adapt their locations. The main result of the process is obviously hypermobility of people bringing in their train, regional, social and human damages.<sup>16</sup> In a similar way Friedman<sup>17</sup> also argues that large companies in the last few decades have been shifting their new investments to the less developed countries where wages are lower and workers are poorly organised. Models developed in Human Geography on spatial extension of multinational enterprises follow the above arguments. While Blackburn Taylor and Hakanson<sup>18</sup> take up individual organisation, Rees and Watts<sup>19</sup> concentrate on the inter-relationship between several organisations and their impact on spatial development. Theories concerning the 'why' and 'where to' of multinationals involve a wide range of explanations both from the standpoints of mainstream economics and political economy. Both economists and human geographers have contributed to the development of theories that offer deeper understanding of politico-economic forces and relations that drive the geographical expansion of MNCs beyond frontier.<sup>20</sup>

The role of geography in the competitive strategy of the MNCs thus is very important together with its impact on the production and consumption of a region that ultimately shape the national economy. Earlier studies done by the author<sup>21</sup> have shown how in the post-colonial era the spatial form of development in India gets associated with the shifting position of the cores in the power and economic hierarchy of the country, social infrastructure distributed and human resource complexes<sup>22</sup> reorganised. In this process location of the plants of multinational corporations for Level II and Level III activities can be a further additive factor. The operations of these corporations in recent period in India can be compared to the earlier cases of enclave investments leading to shallow development. Technology, skilled labour,

marketing and managerial services are provided from abroad with a restricted spill-over effect to the employment of local/regional economies. A few skilled jobs and techniques of modernisation in consumer goods items may create conditions for proliferation of consumption, but it never trickles down as large scale employment is restricted. This not only leads to a stagnation of the economy but also towards its bi-polarisation. On space and sector, income, status pattern and consumption radiate out from the key centres along a declining curve and the existing pattern of inequality gets perpetuated.

The spatial form these corporations assume thus gets directly associated with the reorganisation of the space economy and in some cases with the aggravation of the regional unevenness. Given the existing spatial pattern of growth in India where uneven development perpetuates in both horizontal and vertical dimensions of capital accumulation<sup>23</sup> with few developed core cities and vast impoverished peripheries, the spatial dynamics of multinational corporations calls for further indepth analysis.

#### NOTES

1. See S. Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974 and A. G. Frank, *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment*, MacMillan, London, 1978.
2. While studying the spatial spread of the multinational corporations across national boundaries, Taylor and Thrift have also looked into the question of the rise in their efficiency. See M.J. Taylor and N.J. Thrift, *The Geography of Multinationals*, Croom Helm, London, 1981.
3. See M.K. Saini, *Politics of Multinationals*, Gitanjali Prakashan, New Delhi, 1981.
4. T. Christopher, *The Multinationals*, Penguin, 1974.
5. See S.K. Goel, 'Foreign Private Capital in India', *Peace and Solidarity*, Vol. VIII(12), New Delhi, 1977.
6. Kunning has specifically discussed the different types of activities of the multinational corporations, besides investments. See J.H. Dunning, 'The Multinational Enterprise: The Background' in J.H. Dunning ed., *The Multinational Enterprise*, Allen & Union, London, 1971.
7. R. Vernon, *Sovereignty at Bay: The Multinational Spread of U.S. Enterprises*, Penguin, London, 1971.
8. Seventies were the years when the multinational corporations emerged as a bulwork of power, at times, superseding the state apparatus in taking some economic decisions. Gabriel discusses elaborately about the underlying structure besides this strength. See P.P. Gabriel, 'The Multinational Corporations on the Defensive if not at Bay', *Fortune*, 1972.
9. Ideas of Chandler and Redlich on the levels of activities of the MNCs are not outdated yet. With a geographical perspective the concept of these levels can be further extended in studying the spatial hierarchy of centres in the host and parent countries. See A.D. Chandler and F. Redlich, 'Recent Development in American Business Administration and their Conceptualization', *Business History Review*, March, 1961. Also see S. Hymer 'The Multinational Corporation and the Law of Uneven Development' in J.N. Bhagwati, ed., *Economics and World Order*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1970.
10. See the 'Foreword' written by R. Khan in *Politics of Multinationals* by M.K. Saini, Gitanjali Prakashan, New Delhi, 1981, in which he refers to the circumstances that led to the subservience of the developing countries to the MNCs.
11. See S. Amin, *Ibid*.
12. *Ibid*.



13. See the Survey Report of the Reserve Bank of India, on Foreign Collaboration in India of 1968.
14. The Fifth Lok Sabha Report No. 50 on Committee on Public Undertakings gives a clear picture of the Government's policies on this.
15. It has been argued by a group of Human Geographers that territorial division of labour within the country becomes a determining factor for multinationals corporations to select locations for level II, III or IV activities thereby aggravating unevenness on space, See A. Lipietz, 'The Structuration of Space', in Carney Hudson & Lewis, ed., *Regions in Crisis*, St. Martin's, New York, 1980.
16. Dammette points out to the consequences of the entry of MNCs in a country which starts experiencing some superficial signs of modernisation like rise in internal migration or widening of markets with no real economic revival. See F. Dammette, 'The Regional Framework of Monopoly Exploitation: New Problems and Trends' in J. Carney, et al, ed., *Regions in Crisis*, St. Martin's, N.Y. 1980.
17. See A. Friedman, *Industry and Labour: Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism*, MacMillan, London, 1977.
18. Human Geographers since seventies have concerned themselves with studying the association between space and its selective use by MNCs in the host countries. See A. Blackburn, 'The Spatial Behaviour of American Firms in Western Europe' in F. Hamilton, ed., *Spatial Perspectives on Industrial Organisation and Decision Making*, John Wiley, London, 1974; also see M.J. Taylor, 'Organizational Growth, Spatial Interaction and Location Decision Making', *Regional Studies*, Vol. 9, U.K. 1975 and L. Hakanson, 'Towards a Theory of Location and Corporate Growth' in F. Hamilton and G. Linge, ed., *Spatial Analysis, Industry and the Industrial Environment*, Vol. 1, John Wiley, London, 1979. All of them have analysed spatial operation and dynamics of single firms in different countries.
19. See J. Rees, 'On the Spatial Spread and Oligopolistic Behaviour of Large Rubber Companies', *Geoforum*, Vol. 9, 1978 and H.D. Watts, *The Large industrial Enterprises: Some Spatial Perspectives*, Croom Helm, London, 1980. Watts has elaborated the impact of large corporations on the spatial economic structure.
20. See C. Palloix, 'The Internationalization of Capital and the Circuit of Social Capital' in H. Radice, ed., *International Firms and Modern Imperialism*, Penguin, 1975; also see E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1975 and D. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, Basil Blackwell, London, 1982. Harvey has written an invaluable piece on the mobility of capital and its geographical implications in Chapter 12, pp. 373-411.
21. See S. Banerjee-Guha, 'Colonialism, Neo-colonialism and Regional Disparity in India', Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, 1985; S. Banerjee-Guha & N. Dasgupta, 'The Geography of Socio-economic Well-being in Maharashtra and West Bengal' in A.B. Mukherjee and A. Ahmed eds., *India: Culture Society and Economy*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985; S. Banerjee-Guha and N. Dasgupta, 'Flow of Factors and Growth of Patterns', *Annals*, NAGI, New Delhi (forthcoming).
22. See David Harvey, *Ibid*.
23. See B. Chattopadhyay and M. Raza, 'Regional Development: Analytical Framework Indicators', *Indian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 7, 1975, pp. 75-88.

*Sita in the TV Uttararamayana*

The television version of Uttararamayana—with the main Ramayana going before it—did not aim at popularizing the epic story through the media for the overwhelming majority of the illiterate Indians. Unfortunately a large proportion of this section is eminently impressionable and the media version with its colour, movement, some realism and much magic and supernatural happenings would naturally grip the undivided attention of the masses. Hence if instead of making the epic themes popular, the television organizers decide on inculcating some message, the media offer a unique opportunity of going so. What irks the educated and progressive section of the people is that the aim is tendentious in a vicious way. Apart from a shameless use of magic, and supernatural in the shape of curses and boons, a disproportionately large number of goods filling the stage unwarrantably for long durations controlling human affairs and reducing human heroes to second rate persons, often to semi-automations—apart from all this, the television frequently revives dead, vicious and decadent values. The Uttararamayana is a case in point.

In the television version of the Uttararamayana towards the last section of the Uttararamayana, Sita begs Rama to abandon her. Her reasons are clear: she is a queen in the glorious Ikshvaku line, she is the wife of the famous, heroic and virtuous Rama. The subjects quite legitimately expect such a queen's position to be utterly unimpeachable. Yet not only had Ravana abducted her, but she stayed in the monster's palace for a year, and Ravana was notorious for his lasciviousness. She knows, and Rama, Lakshmana and Vibhisana also know that she has passed her time in Lanka virtuously and that she passed the fire ordeal successfully; that gods did come down from heaven to vindicate her virtues. But the subjects in Ayodhya do not know this, hence for their satisfaction he should banish her. It is the duty of a faithful wife to guard the reputation of her husband, especially as subjects follow the conduct of the king and queen. (cf. The Gita: Whatever the best of men do, that the rest imitate). Staying now as Rama's wife in the palace, she will defile the line, tarnish Rama's reputation and the

\* Formerly Professor of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, Calcutta.

purity of family and home. All this she pleads forcefully on the television screen. The question is where does the director get authentic relevant material for such an unnatural departure?

Let us recapitulate some of the facts in the different versions of the epic text. The question of abandonment arises only on the assumption of Sita's guilt which not one version mentions. The imputed guilt is: Ravana, a stranger, had touched her, as defiling her ritual purity and she stayed in Lanka for nearly a year. Kamban, the author of the southern version of the Ramayana avoids the charge of a stranger's touch very cleverly; in his version Ravana bodily lifts the hut with Sita inside, so that he did not have to touch her. In some other cleverer versions the abducted Sita was not the real person, but either an illusory (maya) or shadow (chaya) Sita. Tilaka the commentator in his exegesis of Valmiki's 'nivadhe ravana sita mayo mayamivasurim', Ravana bore Sita like Maya carrying a demon magic (III: 54:14) spins a tale of mayasita and says that before the abduction Sita went and resided in fire. Tulsidas in his *Ramacaritamansa* repeats this idea in Lankakanda after verse 107-8 and anticipates this verse in III:24. He gives a docetic version and says that what Ravana stole was but a magic replica of Sita. The Kurmapurana also repeats this.

But most versions let the real Sita be abducted. Even here there are two possibilities (1) she is abducted because she herself is guilty as is borne out in Krittibasa, the Jain version *Paumacariau*, the *Kathasaritsagara* synopsis, Jaimin's *Asvamedhaparvan*, *Padmapurana*, and *Kundamala*. Rama hears himself maligned by a washerwoman and on reaching home finds Sita engaged in painting a portrait of Ravana; this convinces him that she had a weakness for Ravana. But her action (painting) was prompted by Kaikeyi's daughter in Chandravati's translation, in the Kashmiri translation and in the *Ananda Ramayana*. In the *Kundamala* her co-wives urge her to paint the portrait. In the Marathi *Bhavartha Ramayana* she ponders over her ill-luck (abduction) and wonders if this is not a punishment for hurting Lakshmana, insulting him wrongly over the golden deer episode.

In some versions she is abducted because she is under a curse, by Bhrgu because the latter had suffered separation from his wife (in Valmiki) by Sukra (in the *Padmapurana*), by Tara who was widowed because Rama had killed Valin (Valmiki and Krittivasa and the Assamese version *Madhavakandali*). In the *Adhyatma Ramayana* we have a curious tale: even when Rama and Sita were happy after their return to Ayodhya, Sita tells Rama that the gods are impatient in heaven for their return. Hence they decide on a ruse: Sita will be abandoned in the forest on a 'feigned scandal' regarding her chastity. There, in the forest her sons would be born. After this she will return to the court to prove her innocence and will enter the earth; Rama will follow her (VII. 37-40). This suicide pact does not hold any water, except that it confirms Rama's faith in her chastity. A much inferior and vulgar explanation of the banishment is found in the *Ananda Ramayana*:

Rama is sexually roused and is extremely passionate when Sita is heavy with her pregnancy; hence he sends her away in order to avoid temptation.

The second and only unmitigated reason for abandoning Sita is public scandal (Lokapavada). This is found in Valmiki, Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacarita*, Bhatti's *Ravanavadha*, *Campuramayana* and Krttibasa. In Valmiki (VT: 115: 2-4), Rama crushes Sita's hope for reunion. He says that he cannot have anything to do with a woman who was abducted and who stayed in Lanka for a full year. The battle he has fought and won had nothing to do with Sita; he fought it to redeem his reputation and the heroic stature of a Ksatriya King whose wife was stolen by another. Now she is an eyesore to him because Ravana cannot have let such a beautiful woman alone. She is free to marry Lakshmana, Bharata, Sugriva or Vibhisana. Krttibasa virtually repeats this harangue, 'none of mine was there (in Lanka) near you'. In this Uttarakanda, subjects whisper that Sita was in Ravana's palace; with such a Sita Rama indulges in dalliance. He has polluted his pure lineage, the woman who Ravana had held is now in Rama's palace. The subjects are too timid to say all this to Rama's face. Bhavabhuti insinuates the same scandal although he does not endorse the view, 'men are apt to malign the chastity of women and of good speech' (I; 5).

In the *Raghuvamsha* Kalidasa omits Rama's cruel words; very casually he mentions their return to Ayodhya 'after Sita she speaks up in defence of her chastity: 'Tell that king from me, I was purified by the fire ordeal in his presence, yet he has abandoned me; is it worthy of his learning, or even of his lineage?' (XII:61). And we remember that most authors plead that abandoning Sita was Rama's social obligation to remove the stain from his glorious line, yet Sita says that this very act taints the honour of the line. Bhatti in his epic says, 'the king who doubted her chastity spoke. . . . 'you who have been pressed in Ravana's arms give me pain in the heart. . . . where is the famous line of Raghu and where are you who have lived in a stranger's house!' But Sita says, 'Take fright of what Fate has in store for you, be ashamed of the people. You are wrongly angry with me who was helplessly abducted by the enemy. My heart is yours, this body alone was stolen by the monster.' (XX: 20-28). She then enters fire, and Brahman, the spokesman of public opinion says to her, 'If you hadn't done this, there would have been a great disaster, we would never be able to be free of our doubts.' Here through Brahman, the public demand for proof of a maligned woman's chastity is conceded. (XXI: 13, 14). In the *Campuramayana* of Bhojaraja, at the trial by fire in the Yuddhakanda we read of 'Sita's impurity which accrued from a long contact with an impure object' (i.e. Ravana, 97-98). In the 'Ramopakhyana' in the *Mahabharata* there is no mention of Sita's banishment in Ayodhya but there definitely is a most cruel and humiliating rejection of the virtuous wife on bare suspicion. After the battle when Sita approached Rama; he said, 'Go, Sita; you are free; I did what had to be done. With

me as your husband you could not languish in the monster's house, hence I killed him. I who can discriminate between sin and righteousness, how can I hold you even for a moment—a woman who has been touched by another man? Whether you are virtuous or not, I cannot enjoy you now (because you are like) sacrificial ghee licked by a dog.' (III: 275: 10–13). Then Sita invoked the gods to vindicate her virtue which they did. The story ends with the royal couple's return to Ayodhya and living happily there. The second rejection of Sita on rumours of scandal is wholly absent, presumably because the Uttarakanda was composed after this part of the Vanapravan, and belongs with the latest Bhargava (Brahmanical) interpolation in the *Mahabharata*. This section ushered in all the decadent social values which still vitiate our social norms.

Now the problem which confronts us is: why did the television authorities invent this earnest supplication of Sita to be abandoned by her husband. We have seen that no version of the epic has anything like it. Many, like the *Raghuvamsha* or the *Ravanavadha* question the validity of Rama's decision. Then, what does this innovation achieve? In the first place, it exonerates Rama who now emerges as an ideal character. Very fair to his wife, he banishes her at her own earnest request. Then, again, it ensures that women's reputation of chastity remain untarnished; if even a shadow of a doubt crosses anyone's mind about it, then the woman is to be regarded unchaste, even if proved otherwise. For, one such proof was hardly enough. Sita was first rejected in Lanka where no subject of Rama was present and where none but he suspected her and chastised her cruelly. The second time, it was rumours of scandal among the subjects which could easily have been quelled by Rama, Lakshmana and Hanumat as eye-witness of her ordeal in Lanka. Surely, Rama's prestige as a virtuous man alone would have nipped any scandal in the bud without Lakshmana's and Hanumat's corroboration. But the worst part is the third time in the royal court where Vasistha swore on his honour and piety that Sita was absolutely pure. Even then she was ordered to prove her chastity. But this time Sita in a quiet language of disillusionment, possibly mingled with deep disgust, refused to swallow the bait; she invoked Mother Earth and disappeared underground. Her sense of self-respect is vindicated in this episode, also her immaculate chastity, because she had invoked Mother Earth with 'If I have been true to Rama alone in my mind, actions and words, 'So we now realize that although in Lanka, Agni and other gods had vouchsafed for her purity, she was banished a second time, and was refused to be accepted as innocent even though the great sage Vasistha swore about it. What guarantee was there that she would be finally exonerated after the ordeal in the court?

"The absurdly disproportionate premium on 'satitva', woman's chastity in a culture which lacks a corresponding masculine concept and hence also the synonym, began to be emphasized in the 2nd-3rd C AD when the Bhagavadgita and the Manusamhita were composed. This

was the age when the latest sections of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were interpolated. The Puranas continue this tradition with tale after obnoxious tale of exaggerated unilateral conjugal fidelity accumulating. As if the burden of this bulky Brahmanical literature was not sufficiently crushing for the Indian women, in this television version of the *Uttararamayana* Sita now pleads earnestly with Rama for rejection. As if the multitude of innocent wives abandoned on mere suspicion—many of whom turn either into charwomen or prostitutes—was not enough, the television Sita now pushes this vicious value down the throats of millions of illiterate women so that they are gladly reconciled to being abandoned on suspicion—to the good of the husband, the family and society. Or, so that they cultivate implicit, unquestioning obedience towards their husbands, with fear and trembling, in hope of 'remaining above suspicion'.

The media are powerful; hence the organizers should be doubly careful about sugar-coating poison-pills which the unsuspecting innocent women viewers unwittingly swallow all too readily, and, in the process lose the modicum of human dignity and self-respect they still may have.

This part of the programme was not for entertainment; it was meant for edification of the Hindu audience 'fast losing touch with their tradition'. It, therefore, recreated, powerfully, a part of the *Ramayana* ethos which is urgently needed now by the ruling class to fortify their case, Subjugation of women by the male species suits the powers that be; it justifies a *status quo* of the reactionary social values.

But worse still, the whole emphasis is very Hindu, very conformist, and especially, a revival of Hinduism in a society where the progressive section is fighting tooth and nail against such regressive values and where slowly and steadily they had made some headway, towards secularism. The present political regime pays a heavy premium on religious revivals of all brands, especially revival of specifically 'Hindu' values. In a country where 82% of the people are Hindus, surely suspending the court verdict on Ram-Janambhumi/Babri Masjid is only a vicious way of buying time till the election. Even this issue makes a warped and wicked use of the *Ramayana*, and it is a very timely and pragmatic decision. But that alone is not sufficient, it had to be augmented by glorifying the Hindu ideology which includes subjugation of women, and male supermacism. And deification of Kingship, for, Sita is desperately seeking to defend the untarnished glory of the Ikshvaku king. All this can be shrewdly woven into a coherent pattern, and religious frenzy can use and exaggerate weak and reactionary sections of the epic itself. This television programme does not betray a renewed interest in the epic but is a very timely move which serves the immediate purpose in hand, viz., desperately lending a political hand to the establishment to win its dirty game.

What makes this *Uttararamayana* episode so sinister is that it is an innovation of the producer, an accretion to conventional Hinduism with

an ulterior motive. If this is connived at by society then such new and tendentious myths will go on being invented, and soon we shall have the older stratum of Hinduism serving as a receptacle for any number of vicious new myths. In the name of Hinduism what is served up in the TV version is a new set of values basically rotten, highly injurious to society and eminently suitable for the ruling class. If this is tolerated, then this licence will be used for inventing suitable myths and broadcasting them through the media whenever the ruling class—which controls the TV—or the upper echelons of society find themselves in a crisis. The epic tradition is too precious to be thus vitiated and lent as a peg for hanging new fangled myths which are so detrimental to society because they successfully hold up secularism and progress.

## DOCUMENT

### *Statement on the Indian Economy\**

The India economy is facing a serious crisis. Its manifestations are: the burgeoning external debt estimated at more than Rs.100,000 crore; the fiscal crisis reflected in the mounting excess of the Government's expenditures over its income financed by deficit financing and internal borrowing; a phenomenal growth in luxury consumption that aggravates the social divide and leaves labour and equipment unutilized in many sectors; a return to a period of rapid rates of price increase; the serious strains in an already inadequate public distribution system as a result of the inability of the Government to procure adequate stocks; and, finally, a sharp increase in unemployment.

The Government's claim that these distortions in the economy can be easily managed is false and deceptive. The problems of unemployment, poverty, slow rates of agricultural growth and external vulnerability have aggravated over the recent period. The fact is that the future of this country is being mortgaged and its economic sovereignty threatened. External debt has reached magnitudes where the Indian Government is susceptible to the dictates of international agencies, commercial bankers and foreign governments.

A host of interrelated factors have brought about the present situation. Principal among them has been the unwillingness of the Government to finance development by mobilising resources from the rich and thereby simultaneously pursuing the goals of growth and greater equality. Notwithstanding the extremely unequal distribution of assets and incomes in the country, the Government has over the years permitted increasing concentration of economic power as well as sharply reduced the rate and spread of direct taxation; the rates of indirect taxation on a host of luxuries have been drastically cut, even while basic necessities have been brought into the net of indirect taxation. And such taxes as are levied are widely evaded.

Meanwhile, non-developmental expenditures have increased rapidly on account of growing transfers to the affluent, profligacy and extravaganzas, widespread misappropriation of public funds and sharp

---

\* Statement adopted at a seminar on 'Indian Economy and Debt' organised by *Social Scientist* at New Delhi on August 7 and 8, 1989.



increases in expenditures on defence and internal security. Defence expenditure, despite its large and growing magnitude, has for too long been kept out of the domain of public discussion. This lack of accountability has resulted in unsound decisions and also in corrupt practices.

The result has been a massive increase in the debt of the Government and in the magnitude of deficit financing. This underlies the increase in the rate of growth of national income, largely on account of incomes in the services sector (including public administration and defence) and increases in the output of those sectors of industry, like consumer durables, that have benefited from the demand generated by increased incomes in the upper income groups.

The leading sector in the growth process in recent years is neither agriculture nor industry, but services. Industrial growth has been concentrated in a few sectors catering to the demand for import-intensive 'luxuries' on the part of the well-to-do sections of the population. And, even the recorded growth in agriculture has been the result of high growth rates in a few pockets of the country, where a relatively small section of the agricultural population has skimmed off the profits. While foodgrains production as a whole has grown at a rate just above the rate of growth of the population, large tracts of the country have in fact registered a decline in per capita food production in recent years. Further, there are a number of crops like coarse grains and pulses that have actually recorded extremely low rates of growth in production.

These distortions in the economy have been accentuated in recent years by the Government's policy of liberalization, that has sought to provide greater economic space for the private sector (including foreign firms) and to increase the degree of openness of the economy. Consequently, the role of the planning process has been sharply eroded. The market mechanism obviously signals the demands of the rich and the private sector has been provided with freer access to imports of capital, technology, equipment and intermediates to meet these demands.

The growth that ensues is financed through increased indebtedness and is necessarily energy-, capital- and import-intensive. This, rather than efficient production based on a rational system of prices and economic scales of production, is the content of the modernization programme that underlies the new economic policy. The burden of debt servicing has mounted to almost 40 per cent of export earnings and more than 25 per cent of current account receipts. External debt as a proportion of national income is 30 per cent as compared with just 10 per cent 7 years ago. If the present level of the current account deficit to GDP ratio persists, then our Debt/GDP ratio would set itself on an explosive path.

This growth process has very limited potential for employment generation, while its fallout in the form of a rapid, unplanned decline in traditional industries leads to a massive loss of existing employment.

Budget deficits together with perverse investment priorities are leading to inflation and imports of foodgrains, edible oils and sugar to hold the price line. This enhances the external debt even further.

These developments have not occurred because there was no alternative. That alternative must begin with a restoration of faith in planning, purposeful interventionism and public investment policies aimed at immediately reversing the present trends. In the short term, import restrictions are a must to prevent further burgeoning of debt. Till such time that demand can be managed in keeping with our potential, the splurge in consumption by a few at the expense of the majority must be curbed by restricting access.

This must be accompanied by a process of fiscal restructuring that both helps raise resources as well as curbs luxury consumption. The principal element of such a restructuring must be a return to reliance on direct taxes and indirect taxes on non-essentials as the main means of mobilising resources. The deficit on the Central Government's budget must be reduced, without adversely affecting the resources of the states.

The immediate management of domestic demand that this would permit must be followed up with an effort at mending the distortion in the production structure. An appropriate wages, incomes and prices policy should aim at redressing the sharp variations in growth in per capita incomes even among the employed.

In agriculture, land reforms accompanied by cooperativisation and a guaranteed minimum wage are a must to restore incentives among small and marginal farmers as well as agricultural labourers for the creation of a viable and vibrant agriculture. Further, through appropriate investments in irrigation and infrastructure and easy access to credit, an effort must be made to redress the glaring regional imbalances that characterise rural India. All of this would result in the enhancement of domestic demand, including the demand for manufactures which would provide the base to build up a more efficient and self-reliant industry.

A rational technology policy, based on a long term perspective of India's strengths and opportunities must be worked out. Given rapid technological advances the world over, such a policy should choose selected areas, promote R & D investments in materials and design right up to the component level and reduce technological dependence. A prerequisite for this is a restructuring of the educational system and realization of universal literacy in the shortest possible time.

These measures must be accompanied by a greater emphasis on socialised consumption, so as to prevent the tendency towards excess resource use by a few at the expense of the viability of the growth process itself. A specific instance that may be mentioned here is transport, where the emphasis should be on cheap, mass transit systems, rather than a proliferation of personal vehicles. This is crucial not only because of the observed increases in the energy intensity of consumption in

India, but also because of the growing evidence of the adverse environmental implications of such a strategy.

There has been a continuing degradation of our environment. Apart from illegal felling of trees, many big projects on irrigation, hydel/nuclear power, mining, etc., are taken up without effective scrutiny by the public of the environmental factors or the impact on the local population. Participation of the people in decisions affecting the environment is essential and effective institutional mechanisms have to be designed for this purpose.

All of this should be accompanied by a greater degree of decentralization of economic decision making, with an appropriate devolution of financial powers from the Centre to the States and further to local level bodies, so as to further the process of development based on local resources and needs. The ability of the system as a whole to mobilise real resources would be greater, the greater is the effort to begin the process of mobilization from below and return its fruits in the form of the power to design and administer local projects.

Finally, the accountability and integrity of the government must be reestablished. This requires an openness in administration and a respect for institutions and constitutional norms. We are at present told too little by the Government about economic realities, and very important decisions, with major implications for the nation's future are reached clandestinely. This must stop. The objective of self reliant development must be reasserted.

## DOCUMENT

### *The Political Abuse of History\**

#### *Babri Masjid-Rama Janmabhumi Dispute*

Behind the present Babri masjid-Rama janmabhumi controversy lie issues of faith, power and politics. Each individual has a right to his or her belief and faith. But when beliefs claim the legitimacy of history, then the historian has to attempt a demarcation between the limits of belief and historical evidence. When communal forces make claims to 'historical evidence' for the purposes of communal politics, then the historian has to intervene.

Historical evidence is presented here not as a polemic or as a solution to the Rama janmabhumi-Babri masjid conflict, for this conflict is not a matter of historical records alone. The conflict emerges from the widespread communalization of Indian politics. Nevertheless it is necessary to review the historical evidence to the extent it is brought into play in the communalization of society.

## I

Is Ayodhya the birth place of Rama? This question raises a related one: Is present day Ayodhya the Ayodhya of Ramayana?

The events of the story of Rama, originally told in the Rama-Katha which is no longer available to us, were rewritten in the form of a long epic poem, the *Ramayana*, by Valmiki. Since this is a poem and much of it could have been fictional, including characters and places, historians cannot accept the personalities, the events or the locations as historically authentic unless there is other supporting evidence from sources regarded as more reliable by historians. Very often historical evidence contradicts popular beliefs.

According to Valmiki *Ramayana*, Rama, the King of Ayodhya, was born in the Treta Yuga, that is thousands of years before the Kali Yuga which is supposed to begin in 3102 BC.

---

\* Issued By Sarvepalli Gopal, Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Suvira Jaiswal, Harbans Mukhia, K.N. Panikkar, R. Champakalakshmi, Satish Saberwal, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, R.N. Verma, K. Meenakshi, Muzaffar Alam, Dilbagh Singh, Mridula Mukherjee, Madhavan Palat, Aditya Mukherjee, S.F. Ratnagar, Neeladri Bhattacharya, K.K. Trivedi, Yogesh Sharma, Kunal Chakravarti, Bhagwan Josh, Rajan Gurukul and Himanshu Ray. (Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

- i) There is no archaeological evidence to show that at this early time the region around present day Ayodhya was inhabited. The earliest possible date for settlements at the site are of about the eighth century BC. The archaeological remains indicate a fairly simple material life, more primitive than what is described in the *Valmiki Ramayana*.
- ii) In the *Ramayana*, there are frequent references to palaces and buildings on a large scale in an urban setting. Such descriptions of an urban complex are not sustained by the archaeological evidence of the eighth century BC.
- iii) There is also a controversy over the location of Ayodhya. Early Buddhist texts refer to Shravasti and Saketa, not Ayodhya, as the major cities of Koshala. Jaina texts also refer to Saketa as the capital of Koshala. There are very few references to an Ayodhya, but this is said to be located on the Ganges, not on river Saryu which is the site of present day Ayodhya.
- iv) The town of Saketa was renamed Ayodhya by a Gupta king. Skanda Gupta in the late fifth century AD moved his residence to Saketa and called it Ayodhya. He assumed the title Vikramaditya, which he used on his gold coins. Thus what may have been the fictional Ayodhya of the epic poem was identified with Saketa quite late. This does not necessarily suggest that the Gupta king was a bhakta of Rama. In bestowing the name of Ayodhya on Saketa he was trying to gain prestige for himself by drawing on the tradition of the Suryavamsi kings, a line to which Rama is said to have belonged.
- v) After the seventh century, textual references to Ayodhya are categorical. The Puranas, dating to the first millennium AD and the early second millennium AD follow the *Ramayana* and refer to Ayodhya as the capital of Koshala. (*Vishnudharmottara Mahapurna*, 1.240.2)
- vi) In a way, the local tradition of Ayodhya recognizes the ambiguous history of its origin. The story is that Ayodhya was lost after the Treta Yuga and was rediscovered by Vikramaditya. While searching for the lost Ayodhya, Vikramaditya met Prayaga, the king of tirthas, who knew about Ayodhya and showed him where it was. Vikramaditya marked the place but could not find it later. Then he met a yogi who told him that he should let a cow and a calf roam. When the calf came across the janmabhumi milk would flow from its udder. The king followed the yogi's advice. When at a certain point the calf's udders began to flow the king decided that this was the site of the ancient Ayodhya.

This myth of 're-discovery' of Ayodhya, this claim to an ancient sacred lineage, is an effort to impart to a city a specific religious sanctity which it lacked. But even in the myths the process of identification of the sites appears uncertain and arbitrary.

If present day Ayodhya was known as Saketa before the fifth century, then the Ayodhya of Valmiki's *Ramayana* was fictional. If so, the identification of Rama janmabhumi in Ayodhya today becomes a matter of faith, not of historical evidence.

The historical uncertainty regarding the possible location of the Rama janmabhumi contrasts with the historical certainty of the birth-place of the Buddha. Two centuries after the death of the Buddha, Asoka Maurya put up an inscription at the village of Lumbini to commemorate it as the Buddha's birth-place. However, even in this case, the inscription merely refers to the village near which he was born and does not even attempt to indicate the precise birth place.

## II

Ayodhya has been a sacred centre of many religions, not of the Rama cult alone. Its rise as a major centre of Rama worship is, in fact, relatively recent.

- i) Inscriptions from the fifth to the eighth centuries AD and even later refer to people from Ayodhya but none of them refer to it being a place associated with the worship of Rama. (*Epigraphica Indica*, 10.p.72; 15.p.143; 1.p.14)
- ii) Hsuan Tsang writes of Ayodhya as a major centre of Buddhism with many monasteries and stupas and few non-Buddhists. For Buddhists Ayodhya is a sacred place where Buddha is believed to have stayed for some time.
- iii) Ayodhya has been an important centre of Jain pilgrimage. To the Jains it is the birth place of the first and fourth Jaina Tirthankaras. An interesting archaeological find of the 4th-3rd century BC is a Jaina figure in grey terracotta, being amongst the earliest Jaina figures found so far.
- iv) The texts of the eleventh century AD refer to the Gopataru tirtha at Ayodhya, but not to any links with the janmabhumi of Rama.
- v) The cult of Rama seems to have become popular from the thirteenth century. It gains ground with the gradual rise of the Ramanandi sect and the composition of the Rama story in Hindi.

Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Ramanandis had not settled in Ayodhya on a significant scale. Shaivism was more important than the cult of Rama. Only from the eighteenth century do we find the Ramanandi sadhus settling on a large scale. It was in the subsequent centuries that they built most of their temples in Ayodhya.

## III

So far no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had been earlier occupied by a temple.

- i) Except for the verses in Persian inscribed on the two sides of the mosque door, there is no other primary evidence to suggest that a mosque had been erected there on Babur's behalf. Mrs. Beveridge, who was the first to translate *Babur Nama*, gives the text and the translation of these above verses in an appendix to the memoirs. The crucial passage reads as follows: 'By the command of the Emperor Babur, whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heavens, the good hearted Mir Baqi built the alighting place of angels. *Bawad [Buwad] khair baqi* (may this goodness last forever)'. (*Babur Nama*, translated by A.F. Beveridge, 1922, II, pp. LXXVII ff)

The inscription only claims that one Mir Baqi, a noble of Babur, had erected the mosque. Nowhere does either of the inscriptions mention that the mosque had been erected on the site of a temple. Nor is there any reference in Babur's memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya.

- ii) *The Ain-i-Akbari* refers to Ayodhya as 'the residence of Ramachandra who in the Treta age combined in his own person both spiritual supremacy and kingly office'. But nowhere is there any mention of the erection of the mosque by the grandfather of the author's patron on the site of the temple of Rama.
- iii) It is interesting that Tulsidas, the great devotee of Rama, a contemporary of Akbar and an inhabitant of the region, is upset at the rise of the mlechha but makes no mention of the demolition of a temple at the site of Rama janmabhumi.
- iv) It is in the nineteenth century that the story circulates and enters official records. These records were then cited by others as valid historical evidence on the issue.

This story of the destruction of the temple is narrated, without any investigation into its historical veracity, in British records of the region. (See P. Carnegy, *Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, Zillah Fyzabad*, Lucknow, 1870; H.R. Nevill, *Faizabad District Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1905).

Mrs Beveridge in a footnote to the translated passage quoted above affirms her faith in the story. She suggests that Babur being a Muslim, and 'impressed by the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine' would have displaced 'at least in part' the temple to erect the mosque. Her logic is simple: '... like the obedient follower of Muhammad he was in intolerance of another Faith, (thus he) would regard the substitution of a temple by a mosque as dutiful and worthy'. This is a very questionable inference deduced from a generalized presumption about the nature and inevitable behaviour of a person professing a particular faith. Mrs Beveridge produces no historical evidence to support her assertion that the mosque was built at the site of a temple. Indeed the general tenor of Babur's state policy towards places of worship of other religions hardly justifies Mrs Beveridge's inference.

To British officials who saw India as a land of mutually hostile religious communities, such stories may appear self-validating. Historians, however, have to carefully consider the authenticity of each historical statement and the records on which they are based.

While there is no evidence about the Babri mosque having been built on the site of a temple, the mosque according to the medieval sources, was not of much religious and cultural significance for the Muslims.

The assumption that Muslim rulers were invariably and naturally opposed to the sacred places of Hindus is not always borne out by historical evidence.

- i) The patronage of the Muslim Nawabs was crucial for the expansion of Ayodhya as a Hindu pilgrimage centre. Recent researches have shown that Nawabi rule depended on the collaboration of Kayasthas and their military force was dominated by Shivaite Nagas. Gifts to temples and patronage of Hindu sacred centres was an integral part of the Nawabi mode of exercise of power. The dewan of Nawab Safdarjung built and repaired several temples in Ayodhya. Safdarjung gave land to the Nirwana akhara to build a temple on Hanuman hill in Ayodhya. Asaf-ud-Daulah's dewan contributed to the building of the temple fortress in Hanuman hill in the city. Panda records show that Muslim officials of the Nawabi court gave several gifts for rituals performed by Hindu priests.
- ii) In moments of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim rulers did not invariably support Muslims. When a dispute between the Sunni Muslims and the Naga Sadhus over a Hanumangarni temple in Ayodhya broke out in 1855, Wajid Ali Shah took firm and decisive action. He appointed a tripartite investigative committee consisting of the district official Agha Ali Khan, the leading Hindu landholder, Raja Mansingh, and the British officers in charge of the Company's forces. When the negotiated settlement failed to control the build up of communal forces, Wajid Ali Shah mobilized the support of Muslim leaders to bring the situation under control, confiscated the property of Maulavi Amir Ali, the leader of the Muslim communal forces, and finally called upon the army to crush the Sunni Muslim group led by Amir Ali. An estimated three to four hundred Muslims were killed.

This is not to suggest that there were no conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, but in neither case were they homogeneous communities. There was hostility between factions and groups within a community, as there was amity across communities.

The above review of historical evidence suggests that the claims made by Hindu and Muslim communal groups can find no sanction from history. As a sacred centre the character of Ayodhya has been changing over the centuries. It has been linked to the history of many reli-



gions. Different communities have vested it with their own sacred meaning. The city cannot be claimed by any one community as its exclusive sacred preserve.

The appropriation of history is a continual process in any society. But in a multi-religious society like ours, appropriations which draw exclusively on communal identities engender endless communal conflicts. And attempts to undo the past can only have dangerous consequences.

It is appropriate, therefore, that a political solution is urgently found: 'Rama janmabhumi-Babri masjid' area be demarcated and declared a national monument.

# MANOHAR BOOK SERVICE

2/6 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002  
Phones: 3275162, 3262796

1. J.M. HEREDERO, *Education for Development—Social Awareness, Organisation and Technological Innovation*, 1989, Rs 100

The book is based on a very concrete experiment started twenty years ago and deals with an all-India problem: poverty and social discrimination. It details the importance of organisation and explains the role of knowledge—social, scientific, technological—in the fight against injustice.

2. *Popular Music in India*, 1989, Rs 200

The essays in this collection deal with subjects like the Music of Bauls of Bengal, the performance of Afghan musician Ann-e Diwaneh as a virtuoso player of dutar, the evolution of phonograph in India, the early years of film music, the complexity of the forms and distribution of film music since the 1970s, the cassette boom, the influences both foreign and indigenous on Indian film music, the social and national implications of its popularity, the musical elements that were explored and assimilated in rock and folk rock groups of 1960s particularly the Beatles and the emergence of distinct music among British born people of South Asia parentage, etc.

3. BEATRICE FORBES MANZ, *The rise and rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 1989, £ 25

Using Tamerlane's career to examine many questions of broad historical and anthropological interest, Dr. Manz discusses the mechanisms of state formation, the dynamics of tribal politics and the relations of tribes to central leadership. She analyzes the political culture of the tribal confederation within which Tamerlane rose to power and the way in which he transformed it from a loose and unruly confederation into a disciplined army of conquest subservient to one man.

4. PARTHA S. GHOSH, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, 1989, Rs 230

Partha Ghosh in this painstaking analysis approaches the problem of conflict in South Asia from the angle of the region's domestic politics. His central argument is that since almost all regimes in South Asia, for historical reasons or otherwise, are existentialist, they respond to political challenges—both domestic and external—in a fashion not conducive to the growth of regionalism. The unscrupulous exploitation by national elites of the region's religious, linguistic, ethnic and demographic problems to further their short-term political interests does not augur well for SAARC. Consequently the growth of regional consciousness though extremely desirable would be painfully slow.

5. IAN TALBOT, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, 1988, Rs 190

This volume provides fresh insights into the politics of British India during the closing period of colonial rule. In particular, it describes as never before, the role played by the Punjab as a bastion of imperial interests, as well as that of the rural idiom of Islam in popularising the Pakistan message. Crucial to both the Muslim League breakthrough and the loyalty of the region was political predominance of the landowners. Their evolving relationship with the British held the key to the region's politics. For this reason, it lies at the heart of this work.

- ◆ For libraries and individuals 10% discount, post-paid.
- ◆ Special additional discount for *Social Scientist* subscribers.  
Please quote your subscription number with orders.

## *Responses to Risk and Crisis*

Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. xix + 303, Paperback, £10.95.

The blurb recommends this book to all social scientists interested in the problem of famine, past and present. I don't, as the focus is not on famine but on the organization of food supplies of two cities, Athens in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods, and Rome under the Republic and Empire. Here I will discuss not the handling of the classical sources, but Garnsey's approach to famine, food scarcity and risk.

Coined money first made its appearance in the ancient Mediterranean world; the consensus seems to be that initially coinage was issued to make several high-level and standardized state payments, especially to mercenaries. Agricultural produce then became subject to marketing, though we cannot assume that all agricultural production was henceforth for the market. One would have welcomed some fresh theoretical formulations on the ancient Mediterranean system of food marketing, and its repercussions on food production itself, but Garnsey's discussion of the food supplies of Athens and Rome does not include an analysis of marketing practices. The question is important, for the advent of grain marketing must have brought about a major disjuncture in economic processes and peasant life.

One is not, of course, implying that because coins were in use, the Greek and Roman economies were just like ours today. Coins were issued by states to defray their own expenses. In Republican and early Imperial Rome, the number of coins in circulation fluctuated with the number of legions in the field; if there were no pressing expenses the state did not mint coins. The trading of one kind of coin for another (metallic contents varied) was widespread over the Roman empire;<sup>1</sup> and there was a continuous debasement of the *denarius*, its silver content being over 90% under Nero (AD 54-68) but less than 60% under Septimius Severus (AD 193-211).

The Greek and Roman world was not one of commodity relations. Wage labour was not fully developed, and wealth was not used as

\* Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

capital (e.g. in land improvement projects or for technological improvements or for achieving economies of scale in craft production) so much as for acquiring land, for leading a sumptuous lifestyle, for achieving status, or for hoarding. While we know that the widespread use of rural slave labour was itself contingent on private property in land, commodity production and market systems, fluctuations in agricultural production would have been a function not of the demand-supply market, but of weather, political stability, army movements, land quality, and so on.

In theory we can say that when coined money appears, a person can sell his wares to anyone who has the cash for them, regardless of relations of co-residence, kinship caste or patronage between the two who make an exchange. Money makes possible frequent and impersonal relations between strangers, and it reduces transaction costs. One might also infer that when a cash economy appears, a poor farmer can supplement his income by wage labour, by peddling say firewood or herbs, or by transporting goods in his oxcart.

While demand for food cannot vary greatly (people have to eat), its supply in a pre-industrial society will be inelastic in the sense that supplies cannot be raised in a year of drought. Thus with the advent of food marketing we expect major fluctuations in the price of grain; marginal shortfalls can lead to substantial price rises. Garnsey shows (p. 25), e.g. that in 282-281 BC on the island of Delos wheat prices more than doubled in the space of about five months, perhaps due to a poor harvest. What would have been the consequences?

It has been said that farmers, as food producers, do not suffer as much from price fluctuations as do poor urban consumers, because after a poor harvest a farmer can at least sell grain at a higher-than-usual price. But this assumes that farmers will have a surplus to sell, and it does not take into account that farmers are also consumers of food. One would instead assume that with the advent of individual holdings and monetization, the rich make good at the expense of the poor. Poor farmers without an adequate store of grain have to buy it when prices are high, and have to settle debts after harvests when grain prices are low. One can perceive this vicious circle in a surviving fragment of *The Hero*, a comedy by Menander set in Attica, where a freedman shepherd borrowed two minas from his ex-owner during a famine, but died soon thereafter. His children have to borrow more money to bury him, and end up working in the house of the ex-owner to pay off the debt. Similarly, in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, numerous papyri show that smallholders operate on credit, occasionally dying in debt; a weaver at Oxyrhynchus borrows money three times and lends twice in the space of 22 years; and pawning of utensils, clothes and jewelry were known in Roman Egypt.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore disappointing that the consequences of monetization are not discussed by Garnsey.

What he does emphasize is that in Athens and Rome the grain trade was handled entirely by private merchants, and came by ship

often from long distances away. Except for threats from piracy and shipwrecks, this trade was secure so long as both cities had good ports, provided large markets and coinage or other produce in return for grain cargoes, and facilities like the special courts in Athens which quickly disposed of maritime cases.

The role of individual profiteering also comes through. Interesting evidence of marketing practices comes from the wax tablets of Pompeii, not discussed in the book. Here<sup>3</sup> we find grain merchants taking loans against hundreds of sacks of Egyptian wheat, chickpeas and lentils, stored in rented warehouses. The debts were repaid in instalments, as grain was released in portions for sale, to avail of the best prices. One infers that profits from grain sales more than compensated for the interest on the loans and the warehouse rents. In archaic Athens Solon banned the export of all agricultural produce except olive oil: Garnsey infers (pp. 74-75, 110-111) that Athenian merchants, interested in profit, preferred to sell abroad. This reminds us of the observation Amartya of Sen that the need for food in a region does not constitute effective demand, and regions experiencing shortages or even famine often export grain.

Although there was no 'trading class' in Athens or Rome, no merchants' lobby or pressure group (in Athens most rich merchants were metics, denied citizenship), it appears from numerous sources that merchants would hold on to their stocks in times of scarcity. News in Athens of the loss of Black Sea ships was enough for prices to rise, and a contemporary source shows that as soon as Pompey was given special powers to eliminate piracy in the Mediterranean, prices in Rome slumped (pp. 201-205). Merchants who released stocks at reasonable prices during food shortages received high status and public honours. But restrictions on hoarding seem to have been few. At one time Athens laid legal restrictions on the amount of grain a trader could purchase at one time (p. 141); traders with funds from Athens were obliged to unload their grain cargoes preferentially at the Piraeus; in Rome the Gracchi attempted to instal state granaries and command the sale of grain at low prices (p. 215) but were assassinated, and their policies were reversed; an anti-speculation law was passed in late Republican Rome, and was re-enacted elsewhere in the Roman empire (pp. 238-239). We don't know how effective such measures were; instead we know that hoarders and profiteers could be lynched or murdered by the mob.

In the early days of the Roman Republic the food supply was a central political issue and contenders for power used the distress of the *plebs urbana* as a weapon for their own advancement. The population of Rome was already huge (about 750,000 in the time of the Gracchi) and could turn into a destructive mob when provoked. Yet, most intriguingly, food supplies were managed on a seemingly ad hoc basis: from the late Republic onwards, the state made grain available at cheap though varying rates, and then free of cost, to large numbers of citizens.

In Athens and republican Rome, grain commissioners, in contact with big merchants and shippers, had to ensure that stocks came onto the market. The joke is that in Athens and in the provincial towns of the Roman empire, it was often speculators who made an act of *euergetism* (public generosity) by releasing stocks, and were publicly honoured in return (p. 83).

How did imperialism work? Athens did not exact grain taxes from her 'allies', but tribute in money. By controlling the seas with her navy, Athens was able to actively interfere with maritime trade, something which is brought out more forcefully by Garnsey (pp. 120-123) than hitherto by most historians. If a *polis* was strong enough to compel grain ships to sail into its own harbour, it could cope with its food shortages. Rome, of course, relied on various taxes, levies and purchases in the provinces to provision the capital and the army. Under the Principate, special favours, including citizenship, were offered to those merchants who committed their ships to supplying the city of Rome for six years. It does not appear that the state had its own grain stocks; taxes were farmed out to the highest bidders, and what kind of arrangements were made to direct the collected grain or cash towards specific points in the Roman empire, we do not know.

These are some of the points of historical interest which emerge from Garnsey's long accounts of the food supply of the two cities. Detailed information on individual crises, their probable causes, and the popular and official responses to them, is chronologically laid out over nine chapters (out of fifteen) of the book.

Chapter 4 is the only one in the book devoted to the peasantry itself. The small size of peasant farms (2 to 4 hectares in classical Athens, and 1.25 to 2.5 hectares in Italy under the Republic), the scattered estates of the rich, the use of slave labour on the estates, are briefly considered. The varying degree of economic security of small holders, tenants and wage labourers is an important point which is also made. Peasant strategies for diversification and minimization of risk are not discussed particularly extensively, and there is little on storage methods. It appears from a few texts that mutual succour and the sharing of food or tools or labour no longer existed in the rural areas, perhaps understandably, given the context of individualized holdings and tax/rent burdens. Life expectancies of 20 to 30 years may be inferred, and there are repeated references in the sources to the inability of the rural poor in the Roman empire to rear their children. One expected these themes to form the substance of the book and not to be restricted to one chapter.

In chapter 6 the author takes the unorthodox view that Attica was not a poor agricultural region, that it could produce food for a population of more than 120,000 people. This kind of discussion is welcome, as history writing is replete with simplistic generalizations about particular regions being agriculturally productive or otherwise, with-

out investigations of the land use or demographic patterns of the relevant period.

When scholars make detailed investigations of the above, however, the methods vary, and quantified inferences from the same set of primary sources also vary. For example Starr<sup>4</sup> estimates the arable area of Attica at 69,000 hectares, whereas Garnsey, going by modern statistics, gives a figure over 90,000 hectares (35 to 40% of 2,400 km).

Garnsey (p. 46) takes the average small holding in Attica to have been 2 to 4 hectares, but Starr argues that a family of four required a holding of 12 hectares to be viable, and that local production could not have fed more than 75,000 people, so that once Athens' urban population had crossed the threshold of 10,000, imports of grain would have been necessary. The two scholars differ so widely in their estimations because they not only differ on the extent of arable land, but also on the main primary source, a list from Eleusis of First Fruits dedications made in all parts of Attica, and on the question of fallows. For Garnsey, the First Fruits inscription, when taken with comparable evidence from Lemnos, represents not an average year, but one of poor harvests (329-8 BC). While Starr takes alternate year fallows to have been the rule, Garnsey argues that instead fields were put alternately under cereals and legumes. The legumes could have been used as fodder, reducing the need for annual transhumance (moving flocks far from home in the dry season and thus depriving farms of manure for that period).

The reader will have guessed that arguments about carrying capacity must rest on estimates of food needs of the population. This is not a simple matter. Garnsey assumes a consumption of 150 to 230 kg grain/person/year (p. 102, table 7). But Evans<sup>5</sup>, using figures for food rations of Roman soldiers and Cato's figures for farm labour rations, assumes 230 to 275 kg wheat/person/year for Roman Italy. Differences in these estimates can accrue from estimates of what proportion of nutritional requirements were provided by cereals.

One then appreciates that inferences about past production and productivity are at best tentative. True, Garnsey is fully aware of this and the footnotes in this chapter require careful reading. But let us revert to the view that Attica was not infertile country, that it was capable of feeding a population of more than 120,000. Garnsey admits that Attica may not have realized its full agricultural potential.

This is precisely the problem with the concept of carrying capacity. If we take all 51 countries in Africa, the theoretical carrying capacity of Africa, even with simple technological inputs, is 2.7 times the present population. Yet in this century Africa has been beleaguered by famine.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, can we consider land use to have been static? Carrying capacity is the maximum population an area can sustain indefinitely without environmental degradation. One wonders why Garnsey ignores a passage in one of Plato's minor dialogues (*Critias*) on erosion in Attica: 'All the rich, soft soil has melted away (into the sea), leaving

a country of skin and bones. . . There are mountains in Attica which can now keep nothing but bees, but which were clothed, not so very long ago, with fine trees producing timber suitable for roofing the largest buildings. . . .' (This passage would date to around the middle of the 4th century BC) There is also telling evidence from the excavations of the *agora* of Athens: wells became progressively deeper between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. The water table seems to have fallen appreciably, so that around 350 BC wells began to be replaced by rain water cisterns.<sup>7</sup>

Ellen<sup>8</sup> cautions us that even the simplest of land use systems leave their mark on vegetation, fauna, soil quality or hydrology. 'The stable and apparently conservationist strategies of many small-scale societies are largely an illusion'. Ellen goes on to maintain that exercises on carrying capacity which ignore seasonal changes in labour requirements, and variability of soils, farm size, intensity of cultivation, and so on, are of little use.

In Chapter 7 Garnsey then asks when and why Athens became dependent on grain imports. A rapid rise in population probably coincides with the first arrival of shipments of grain from the Black Sea. Going by Herodotus' figures for the number of Athenian hoplites at Plataea and the number of Athenian ships at Salamis, Garnsey suggests that by 480 BC the population of Attica had crossed 120,000, and was to rise still higher by 300 BC. Attica did not reach its full carrying capacity, probably, because of decades of warfare and ultimate political collapse. The author does not however consider food supply problems to have been the only force behind Athenian imperialism.

In chapter 15, 'The Subjects of Rome', the alleged theme is the impact of rents, tax and resource concentration in the hands of the rich, on the lives of the producers in Italy and the provinces. A brief survey is made of the various taxes, rent rates, compulsory purchases, supplementary burdens such as billeting of the army, etc. The 'impact' is discussed in terms of the sale of children; Trajan and Hadrian's *alimenta* schemes; the means whereby a provincial town could procure grain from elsewhere in case of shortfall; euergetism; the degree of intervention by imperial agencies; and the few instances when *alimenta* schemes were introduced in the provinces. To be sure, these are the points on which the sources are the most forthcoming, but the theme of the chapter is belied. There is no discussion whatever on the impact of the regressive system of taxation on peasant producers' production decisions or living conditions.

The reader is left with a sense of frustration. In the Preface it is stated that 'the question at issue is the impact of the demands of the imperial power on the living standards and survival chances of the mass of subject communities and households.' Garnsey has not even begun a discussion of this issue in the book.

One must be liberal enough to allow a scholar the right to approach a subject from that particular angle which interests him. Here, how-



ever, I wonder if the approach (exclusive concentration on the food supply of cities) actually skews the scholar's perceptions. Incidental references in the book show that rural famine and food crises in the cities were not necessarily correlated. If famine in the rural areas gets scant mention in the literature and inscriptions, can we assume that it was scarce? Garnsey states more than once that 'famines were rare, but subsistence crises falling short of famine were common' even though peasant holdings in Roman Italy and in Attica were hardly viable (p. 46), and in Attica the probability of wheat failure is once every four years, barely failure once every twenty years, and legume failure three years in every four (p. 10 ff), and in spite of the harsh exploitation by Rome of her provinces.

If famines were so rare in the ancient Mediterranean world—Garnsey says Athens suffered not very many more than three famines between 500 and 85 BC, and that famines were few in the Roman empire (pp. 37-38)—this is indeed significant: for in the medieval period famine was endemic. France, e.g., with its low population and labour shortages, suffered 10 general famines in the 10th century, 12 in the 11th, 2 in the 12th and 13 in the 16th century, and this excludes the 'hundreds and hundreds of local famines'.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore in chapter 3, devoted to the theme of the infrequency of famine, one expects a discussion on the exceptional success of ancient agriculture, on land use and demography, on institutional mechanisms in the countryside for averting disaster, and on ecological parameters. Instead the chapter surveys the scrappy evidence for famine in inscriptions and literature; the ancient terms for hunger, shortage, crisis, etc; the description of a famine in Edessa in AD 499 by Joshua the Stylite; and on the basis of the latter, the probable causes, geographic spread, duration and responses to famines in general. Lack of written evidence does not, to my mind, establish the infrequency of famine. And if the title of a book addresses itself to famine, one expects it to deal in fair measure with the countryside, not so much with civic supplies.

One's feeling of frustration is particularly keen as so many historical issues are involved. The most striking feature of the *polis* of Athens was the participation, in the deliberations of its assembly, council and jury courts, and in the elective magistracies, by all citizens irrespective of wealth. Around 322 BC more than half the citizen body comprised people worth 20 minas (ie people owning 2 to 4 hectares of land), while there were also rich families and landless families. It has been suggested that it was pay for assembly attendance and jury service that enabled poor citizens to participate in the running of the *polis*.<sup>10</sup> It has also been argued that slaves were extraordinarily cheap, that even small farmers could afford slaves and thereby intensify the cultivation of their small plots.<sup>11</sup> The broader issue however still remains: how did the large number of small farmers avoid the spiral of debt, and maintain their independence and their stake in the running of the *polis*, which was a third the size of Sparta but much more densely

populated and not the most fertile region of Greece, a *polis* in which social stratification was clearly established, in which Solon and the tyrants had at most cancelled existing debts or made cash doles, but had never organized an equitable redistribution of the land, and a *polis* which did not really milk the rich?

Where the Roman empire is concerned there is the extension of agriculture, the extortion of agricultural surpluses, a monetary system embracing the whole empire (except Egypt till the 3rd century) to varying degrees, and a floruit of urbanism. How viable in the long term was Roman agriculture in the different regions? In Africa Roman rule saw the extension of agriculture, with drier pockets put under olive; Pliny writes about Africa's prodigious harvests; archaeological remains reveal a great number of small-scale soil and water conservation works; and Josephus tells us that Africa in the 1st century AD fed the city of Rome for eight months in the year. According to Raven<sup>12</sup> northwest Africa's grain production rose ten fold by the 2nd century. (How this figure is derived, we are not told.) Moreover, Africa was one of the most urbanized of the Roman provinces. Yet we know from tax registers that by AD 422, one-third to one-half of agricultural lands in Africa Proconsularis had been abandoned.<sup>13</sup>

Again, Egypt was the second most important supplier of grain to Rome, and the most populous of her provinces; yet in the Fayum depression at least, we have papyri and archaeological evidence attesting to the steady reduction of populations of the villages of Philadelphia, Karanis and Theadelphia from the mid 1st Century AD onwards.<sup>14</sup> Jones thinks that the causes for desertions of farms through the Roman empire were in general rural poverty, malnutrition, high mortality, and conscription. One doubts if soil deterioration can simply be ruled out for provinces other than Egypt; even so, surely the large scale desertions, and famine, would be the two faces of the same coin?

The great volume of wheat exports to Rome from Africa and Egypt (estimated at over 220 million kg per year from Africa) need not testify to rural prosperity. In the late 18th century Poland was a major wheat exporter. This is not explained by fertility but by the degree of exploitation of the Polish peasantry, who could eat only barley and oats. Poland was an exporter, but not a major consumer, of wheat.<sup>15</sup>

This gives another dimension to the problem of famine and food shortage. To what extent do consumption patterns in the cities reflect the consumption of peasants? Garnsey does not deal with this problem extensively enough. Is this the context in which we should read Galen's famous passage about urban people 'taking', at the end of summer, the wheat, barley, beans and lentils from the fields, leaving only inferior pulses and fruits for the villagers, so that the latter had to fall back on 'unhealthy forms of nourishment'? Were millet, lupin, sesame, linseed, dried figs and vetches only famine foods, or did they form a regular part of peasant diet? Pliny says the peasants of north Italy ate linseed ground and cooked in a porridge; Diodorus of Sicily says the Egyptian

peasants raised their children on boiled vegetables, papyrus stalks and the roots and stems of marsh plants. In fact, one village in the Fayum around 100 BC had only 55% of the area under wheat, with 11% each under lentil and beans, 10% under vetch, and 3% under barley.<sup>16</sup> In medieval Europe, when grain prices rose, wheat 'supplied the purse rather than the table', and peasants fell back on other cereals.<sup>17</sup>

Garnsey does not discuss the changes in agricultural practices brought about by Roman rule. Even a cursory reading of the secondary sources reveals that these were substantial. In some parts of Italy the planting of Roman colonies meant a shift from transhumant pastoralism to farming; elsewhere, huge ranches were carved out of mixed farming lands.<sup>18</sup> Encroachment, purchase and veteran settlement caused a substantial reduction of the *ager publicus*, commons used as grazing, timber or foraging resources.<sup>19</sup> On the Rhine-Upper Danube frontier, expansion and/or intensification of agriculture in the first two centuries BC brought about 'drastic erosion and floods' as evidenced by fossilized tree trunks in fluvial deposits.<sup>20</sup> Early in the Roman period Belgium, Holland, Germany and England saw substantial rises in population, but in some areas, as early as the 2nd century AD, pollen diagrams indicate that tree growth was encroaching on hitherto cultivated tracts. Waateringe suggests that an increasing spiral of demand stimulated agricultural intensification, and led to soil exhaustion, to a 'decline in the recuperative powers' of the simple agrarian systems of native peoples.<sup>21</sup> In many regions, the cultivation of vine and olive expanded. Garnsey does not believe that it did so necessarily at the cost of cereals, but notes (p. 225) that an edict of Domitian prohibited further expansion of vine cultivation in Italy, because the vine harvests had been good but that year there was a scarcity of grain.

What would have been the repercussions of the extension of agriculture in regions like north Africa where the prevalent land use was a combination of agriculture and transhumant pastoralism as interconnected and complementary subsistence activities? In the first place it would mean that pastoralism would retreat behind agriculture and there would be reduction of livestock. Unlike colonial governments of the recent past the Roman authorities neither totally expelled pastoralists from their north African territories, nor compelled all to sedentarize. The inner and outer *limes* are now interpreted as the creation of a filter and waiting zone, through which movements of herders could be controlled. But these controls, the building of roads and forts, and the extension of agriculture, did disrupt herder movements, as we know from inscriptions. If the grazing range were reduced, overgrazing could have ensued in certain pockets. Meanwhile there would have been increasing demands on existing woodland or pasture for grazing, fuel and timber. The most critical impact could however have occurred in natural fertilizer. The most efficient preindustrial method of fertilization is the leading of flocks into fields for some time in the year and this is in many parts of the world the crucial element in herder-farmer

relationships. In many parts of the world the intensity of cultivation is dependent on the quantity of manure. What were the repercussions on African agriculture of the controls over pastoral movements? Did some farmers lose easy access to folding arrangements with individual herders? It appears that the agronomists Cato (2nd century BC), Varro (1st century BC) and Columella (1st century AD) 'leave no doubt that manure. . . was in desperately short supply' in the Roman world.<sup>22</sup> In Africa tenants paid as rent 1/3 of their cereal crops, but only 1/4 of the beans. Was legume cultivation being encouraged because of manure shortages?

It may also be asked whether commercialization and private trade in grain would have protected city supplies at the cost of the rural areas. That all manner of local and exotic food items were available in Athens and Rome, is well known. But what degree of marketing can we expect in the rural areas? Bowman<sup>23</sup> insists on the high degree of monetization of the Egyptian economy, including the rural sphere. But Crawford<sup>24</sup> points out that in rural Europe it is not small coins but high value coins which tend to occur, and in hoards; that these coins are often much older than the stratum in which they were found; and thus infers that in many rural areas coinage was mainly a store of wealth and a form of future tax payments. For Roman Africa before the spread of olive cultivation, Whittaker<sup>25</sup> also doubts the existence of widespread marketing, as rents were a portion of the produce, and land tenure still retained features of communal systems. But a money tax was levied on herds, and we would still need to ask how large African cities like New Carthage (with a population of more than 100,000) and Lepcis Magna (about 80,000) and about a dozen others with populations of 20,000 to 40,000<sup>26</sup> could have procured their food supplies. If land transport costs were high and marketing systems not well developed, the temptation may have been to intensify cultivation in the immediate vicinity of towns, at the cost of soil quality. Garnsey reports (p. 260) an early custom in Sicily of supplementing the tax with 'no fewer than three compulsory purchases, the last of which was for the governor's use and could be commuted for cash'. Were such practices more prevalent than indicated by the available sources?

Connected with this is the question of the large number of urban centres in the Roman empire. Are they a testimony to the prosperity of the rural economy? Hopkins<sup>27</sup> argues for a rise in the average standard of living during the Roman empire, and for Garnsey (p. 191) urbanism is a sign of rural health in the sense that 'widespread urban expansion in Italy is incompatible with a slump in Italian grain production'. But Hopkins agrees in principle with scholars like Finley who project classical towns not as the loci of trade and manufactures, so much as major consumption centres, where the elite lived. And we know that cities like Rome expanded in size at least partly because of the influx of dispossessed or impoverished rural people; that in many non-Asian provinces towns were built after conquest not as true urban centres but in

the course of the creation of local *civitas* communities who would govern themselves on the Roman model. Again, the high costs of over-land transport by oxcart in the Roman world, has been emphasized by most historians, and in Hopkins' opinion, peasant households were largely self-sufficient, with only tenuous linkages with the market.

But Polly Hill gives another dimension on peasant marketing.<sup>28</sup> Peasant households may link with the outside world by selling some of their produce, not because of their prosperity, but due to poverty or the dearth of village crafts. Therefore it is meaningless to attempt too fine a distinction between cash and subsistence crops. Small farmers may be obliged to sell a fair portion of their output, although this is badly needed for consumption, to pay for other necessities. [We can guess about an Egyptian peasant's need for cash when we learn that, in the town of Oxyrhynchus in the 2nd century, it was not only craft produce or rock salt which were marketed commodities, but also—very significantly to my mind—wood, dung, cowpats and green manure.<sup>29</sup>] Poor peasants cannot wait for high grain prices before they sell, and are in a vulnerable position in the market. Sometimes the poor farmers of a region spend more on food than do the rich farmers.<sup>30</sup> Even more vulnerable in the market are pastoralists. We may recall the rebellion in Tunisia by the Musulamii, against Roman rule. Tacfarinas, the leader of the rebellion, voiced as one of his grievances the fact that his people were forced to buy grain from Roman dealers.<sup>31</sup>

If we bear this in mind it becomes difficult to accept Hopkins' thesis<sup>32</sup> that insofar as taxes were collected in cash, Roman rule injected some dynamism into the economies of the provinces, because in order to raise cash for the tax, people would have to sell something on the market, and trade would be stimulated. (We in India were also once at the receiving end of this kind of nonsense from the rulers of a very different kind of empire.) One also wonders how the Roman system, in which tax collection was farmed (and often sub-farmed) out at a 6% commission, and amenable to illegal profits of as high as 12%,<sup>33</sup> could have provided any kind of stimulus to prosperity. In Augustus' time, 70% of state funds were spent on the military, 15% on grain distributions in the city of Rome, 13% on the bureaucracy, and the rest on games, roads and public buildings.

Evidence for erosion, large scale desertions of farm lands, the exposure of infants, banditry in Cilicia and France, as well as the laws of the late empire tying peasants to their lands for life (a desperate measure indeed), give the lie to any claim of the Roman empire's 'benefits to the masses'. Garnsey's book may not fall in the 'apologia for empire' category, but by default it may convince the unwary reader that famine in the countryside was an exceptional occurrence in the 'ancient' world. As is now understood, famine is not simply a matter of failure of rains. 'Famine is political.'<sup>34</sup> The political system of the Roman empire appears to me to have had all the ingredients necessary to generate repeated famines.

## NOTES

1. M. Crawford, 'Money' and exchange in the Roman world', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 60 (1970) pp. 40-48.
2. A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC-AD 642*, British Museum, London, 1986, pp. 63-65, 98, 116-117.
3. L. Casson, 'The role of the state in Rome's grain trade' in J.H.D. D'Arms and E.C. Kopff, (eds.) *The Seaborne Commerce of Ancient Rome*, American Academy, Rome, 1980, pp. 26-27.
4. C.G. Starr, *The Economic and Social Growth of Early Greece*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1977, pp. 147-167.
5. J.K. Evans, 'Wheat production and its social consequences in the Roman world', *Classical Quarterly*, 31 (n.s.) (1981) pp. 428 - 442.
6. R. Barker, 'Linking and sinking' in M. Galntz, (ed.) *Drought and Hunger in Africa: Denying Famine a Future*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 150-151.
7. J.M. Camp, *The Athenian Agora*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1986, pp. 149, 156-157.
8. R. Ellen, *Environment, Subsistence and System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 22-23, 41-45.
9. F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism I: The Structures of Everyday Life*, Collins, London, 1981, p. 74.
10. M.M. Markle, 'Jury pay and assembly pay at Athens' in P.A. Cartledge and F.D. Harvey, (eds.) *Crux: Essays to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix*, Academic Press, London, 1985, pp. 265 - 297 is a recent review of the problem.
11. M.H. Jameson, 'Agriculture and slavery in classical Athens', *Classical Quarterly*, 73 (1977-78) pp. 122-145.
12. S. Raven, *Rome in Africa*, Longman, London, 1984, p. 86.
13. A.H.M. Jones, *The Roman Economy*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, pp. 82-89.
14. Bowman, op. cit. pp. 77, 142.
15. Braudel, op. cit. pp. 125-126.
16. Bowman, op. cit. p. 101
17. Braudel, op. cit. pp. 133-135.
18. D.W. Rathbone, 'The slave mode of production in Italy', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 73 (1983) pp. 160-161.
19. R.P. Duncan-Jones, 'Some configurations of landholding in the Roman empire' in Finley, M.I. (ed.) *Studies in Roman Property*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 7.
20. K. Randsborg, 'The town, the power and the land' in T.C. Champion, (ed.) *Centre and Periphery*, Hyman, London, 1989, pp. 212-213.
21. W.G. van Waateringe, 'The disastrous effect of the Roman occupation' in R. Brandt and J. Slofstra, (eds.) *Roman and Native in the Low Countries*, British Archaeological Reports 184, Oxford, 1983, pp. 147-157.
22. Evans, op. cit. p. 434
23. Bowman, op. cit. p. 90 ff.
24. Crawford, op. cit.
25. C.R. Whittaker, 'Land and labour in north Africa', *Klio*, 60 (1978) pp. 331-362.
26. Raven, op. cit. p. 106 ff.
27. K. Hopkins, 'Economic growth and towns in classical antiquity' in P. Abrams and E.A. Wrigley, (eds.) *Towns in Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 35-77.
28. Polly Hill, *Dry Grain Farming Families*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.
29. Bowman, op. cit. p. 107
30. B. Harriss, et. al. *Exchange Relations and Poverty in Dryland Agriculture*, Concept, Delhi, 1984, pp. 4, 56-57.
31. Whittaker, op. cit.
32. K. Hopkins, 'Taxes and trade in the Roman empire', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 70 (1980) pp. 101-125.
33. Jones, op. cit. pp. 114-139.

34. T.M. Shaw, 'Towards a political economy of the African crisis' in M. Glantz, (ed.) *Drought and Hunger in Africa: Denying Famine a Future*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 129.

## SELECT BOOK SERVICE SYNDICATE

E-10, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110 048

### Exclusive Distributors in India

---

ALFRED M. JAEGER AND RAHINDRA N. KANUNGO, *Management in Developing Countries*, Routledge, London & New York, 1990, £ 35 HB, 240 pp.

This volume provides the first comparative, critical assessment of how management theories and techniques used successfully in the West can be applied in developing countries.

---

MICHAEL LIPTON & JOHN TOYE *Does Aid Work in India? A Country Study of the Impact of Official Development Assistance*, Routledge, London & New York, 1990, £35, HB

How has India benefited from 30 years of official aid programmes? Michael Lipton and John Toye examine the impact of foreign aid to developing countries, focusing on India as an example of a very important recipient country.

---

MOHAMMED AYOUB, *India And Southeast Asia Indian Perceptions And Policies*, Routledge, London & New York, 1990, £ 25 HB

India has espoused the notion of building 'South-South' relations with other developing countries in recent years. The ASEAN countries, in particular, have come to play an important part in India's trade and policy considerations over the last decade. *India and Southeast Asia* provides a close contextual analysis of India's interests and perceptions in the region during its forty years of independence.

---

V.V. RAMANADHAN (Ed), *Privatisation in Developing Countries*, Routledge, London & New York, 1989, £ 40 HB, pp. XIV + 443

This book subjects the privatisation programmes of countries as diverse as India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Peru to critical scrutiny. It examines the role of international aid agencies, including the World Bank, in promoting these schemes and it details the positive impact of them, as well as their pitfalls.

---

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Mappila Peasant Revolts*

K.N. Panikar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar 1836-1921*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 232, Price Rs. 175

This is a study of the Mappila peasant revolts in Malabar in the nineteenth century, culminating in the historic 1921 uprising against British rule. K.N. Panikkar's book is a significant addition to the growing body of work on this important peasant revolt in colonial India.

The 1921 peasant rebellion in Malabar, with the Mappila peasantry in the vanguard, had both an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist content. It was, however, complicated by the fact that religion played a binding role in mobilising the Mappila peasantry and the religious idiom expressed the anti-landlord and anti-British sentiments. In tracing the genesis of the Mappila peasant revolts, Panikkar draws on the wealth of material available in the British administration's official records, to effectively delineate the nature of the agrarian society, which created the oppressive conditions leading to the Mappila peasants' discontent. The *jenmi* system of landlordism in Malabar was strengthened and distorted by the British administration which succeeded the Tipu Sultan regime in Malabar. Panikkar endorses Logan's argument that the *jenmi* as absolute proprietor of the soil 'is founded on error and has been brought about by engrafting on the customary Malayali law usages which spring from European ideas of property having a totally distinct origin and history'. This introduction of the *jenmi* as the absolute proprietor of land upset the traditional tenurial relations with the intermediary tenant, the *Kanakkaran*, and the actual cultivator, the *verumpattakaran*.

In the case of the Mappilas, they were disadvantaged from the outset with the bulk of the *jenmis* being Namboodiris or Nairs and the intermediaries also belonging predominantly to the Nair community. The Mappilas of Malabar, right from the beginning of the British colonisation, developed antagonistic relations with the British rulers. This was also due to the fact that the British restored the lands of the *jenmis* and rajas who had fled the Tipu regime. The Mappilas found



themselves once again under the subjection of the old landlordism; this time more virulent, strengthened by British jurisprudence. Panikkar, however, considers the view, that the Mappilas had benefitted under Tipu's rule to be erroneous. According to him, there was no large scale transfer of land to the Mappilas and even those who got some land did not benefit, as, instead of rent, they had to pay considerable land revenue to the government. While this may be true to some extent, it should be remembered that the Mappilas who were groaning under *jenmi* oppression in the pre-Mysore rule days, must have found the vanquishing of the old *jenmi*-raja rule, a relief. Further the British were seen not as liberators but restorers of the *ancient regime*.

Apart from this, Pannikkar has meticulously documented the nature of the 'outbreaks' which punctuated the whole of the nineteenth century. In all these incidents, the main actors were impoverished peasant Mappilas who attacked the hated *jenmi* or his agents. Analysing the social composition of the attackers and the victims of four Mappila uprisings, Pannikkar shows that the overwhelming majority of the rebels were either tenants or agricultural labourers - the rural poor. Their targets were predominantly 'men of property and government servants'. Of the eighty-three killed by the rebels, forty-two were *jenmis*. The study also shows that these were not fanatical Mappila outrages against Hindus inspired by religious fanaticism. In the pre-1921 rebel attacks, there were no indiscriminate attacks on Hindu lives or property.

The religiosity of the Mappila rebels was a common feature in all the anti-landlord attacks. Their alienation from, and hatred of the system was expressed through the religious idiom. Killing a *jenmi* who evicts his tenant was not a sin, ordained the *tangals* who provided the ideological leadership for the revolts. While Panikkar concludes that the 1921 uprising, 'underlined a consciousness primarily rooted in a opposition to the landlord and the colonial state', he does not discount the influence of religion which 'informed the beliefs and outlook of the peasantry.' He emphasizes the combination of the economic factor and religious belief. 'It was in the interplay of these two factors and not just in any one or both of them that the uprisings were rooted.' While conceding that both these factors are to be taken together, it needs to be stressed that the fundamental cause of the Mappila peasant outbursts was the agrarian economic oppression. The religious fervour associated with the Mappila rebels in the successive revolts was literally the 'sigh of the oppressed'. In this respect, Conrad Wood in his book, *The Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis* (Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987) has treated the rebellion as emanating from economic exploitation. This approach, which as Panikkar puts it, 'follows an essentially economic interpretation treating religion only as a means of mobilisation', has its merits.

In this connection, in Panikkar's illuminating work, there are certain aspects, which given more attention would have clarified the sec-

ondary, yet catalytic role of religious solidarity. Regarding the Mappila peasants, Pannikar correctly observes: 'The religious identify distanced them from the Hindu propertied classes with whom they hardly had any cultural or communitarian consciousness'. But this gulf was founded on the material reality of Hindu *jenmi* oppression of the Mappila peasants in Mappila populated areas of Ernad and Walluvanad taluks. This was the basis for the sharp cleavage in which religious consciousness acted as a vehicle for anti-landlord mobilisation. As Panikkar himself records at the outset, 'there were only 12 Mappilas among the 829 principal *jenmis* holding more than 100 pieces of land in an *amsam* in 1881'.

Further, Panikkar notes the 'comparative quiescence' of the Hindu peasantry, though there was a limited participation of Hindus also in rebel actions against landlords in 1921. He points to the socio-religious bonds of the oppressed tenants in the Hindu fold with their *jenmis* as the reason for their passivity. While this is a valid reason by itself, it should also be properly emphasised and linked to the fact that the tenancy movement of the period, dealt with by Panikkar, had a specific class orientation. That of the intermediary *kannakkar* tenants who did not articulate the demands of the *verumpattakar*, the actual cultivators. Given this class limitation, the real mass of the 'Hindu' cultivating peasants remained outside the fold of the movement in a real sense.

Secondly, unlike in the thirties, when the CSP and later the Communist Party organised the peasantry on class lines, in the period of the 1921 upsurge, the nature of the Congress leadership prevented any significant attempt to reach out to the Muslim peasant mass and forge bonds of unity with the non-Muslim peasants. The betrayal by the Congress middle class-*kanakkar* dominated leadership was rightly highlighted by EMS Namboodiripad in his analysis of the Malabar revolt. Panikkar touches on this but does not draw out its implications. It required another one and a half decades for the left-led Congressmen to mobilise all sections of the oppressed peasantry into an organised movement. The same conditions of economic exploitation provided the basis for the militant anti-feudal peasant movement. The movement in which the oppressed Hindu peasants broke out of existing social and ideological bonds in a big way. The sweep of this anti-landlord movement once again drew significant sections of the Mappila peasantry also on a class basis.

Panikkar is right in concluding that 'Although the rebellion was not intrinsically communal, its consequences were decidedly so'. The failure of the leadership of the Congress in Malabar to stand by this militant anti-feudal; anti-imperialist struggle of 1921 snapped the bonds which were beginning to be forged with the Khilafat movement.

It is true that in the final phase, when the British armed forces had the upper hand, some of the rebels targetted Hindus for attacks and attempted conversions to Islam. But this should not detract from the

main thrust of the movement, a heroic six-month long armed struggle against landlordism and the imperialist state-what the book's title aptly calls *Against Lord and State*. The repression that followed the suppression of the revolt was brutal. 3989 rebels were slaughtered according to official estimates alone. The real figure was much higher. More than forty thousand were arrested and most of them imprisoned for long periods. Some died in hellish torture as the 70 (including 3 Hindus) who suffocated to death in a closed wagon in which they were being transported. No twentieth century peasant revolt in pre-independence days witnessed such ferocious repression. Here again the Congress leadership both locally and nationally, shamefully turned their backs on this bloody retribution.

Panikkar's study of the Mappila peasant revolts, just as the previous work by Conrad Wood, is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the historical role played by the peasantry in the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggle during British rule, in the period prior to the development of the organised peasant movement.

Prakash Karat  
Member, Central Secretariat,  
Communist Party of India (Marxist)  
14, Ashoka Road, New Delhi.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Working Class History*

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, Rs. 225.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has been taking issue with 'orthodox' writings on labour history for quite some time now. As the title of his book proclaims, his is an attempt to rethink labour history. If this book gives the impression of being a collection of essays, it is partly because a large chunk of this book has appeared elsewhere. Two major chapters form the contributions of the Subaltern Studies enterprise. These as readers of *Social Scientist* will recall, have been dealt with in the two extended reviews that have appeared in that journal.

The central problem that the author brings forward is the persistence of precapitalist relationships among the working class in the jute mills of Bengal. As he states in his preface, although there cannot be any capitalism without the working class, there certainly can be capitalism without the working class, there certainly can be capitalism that subsumes precapitalist relationships. Although this has generally been accepted by historians of Indian labour, it usually meant only a casual nod towards the 'complexities of caste relationships'. Otherwise the notion that immigrants become the working class the moment they enter the factory still holds strong. From this position Chakrabarty argues that, 'a particular form of authority or a system of power. . . implies a particular cultural formation producing and supporting it.' (p. 69). This culture was hierarchical and inegalitarian, in short 'feudal'. To quote Chakrabarty again, 'in these contexts, the master-slave dialectic reproduces itself far more often than does the phenomenon of the rule of the citizen.' (p. xi). The writing of the history of the jute mill workers means recognizing this reality. For not accepting this means falling into the trap of a Marxist teleology that posits a unilinear evolving consciousness which often means making a choice in favour of the dominant ideological discourse of the day.

This book which is divided into seven chapters, begins with a long chapter on the nature of the jute industry. In its depth and range it probably rivals only Amiya Bagchi's account in *Private Investment in India*. Chakrabarty has shown that the predominantly white mill managers were basically mercantilist in spirit. Thus proved to be an anachronism after the first world war, affecting their technological

and economic policies and had a profound influence on the working class in the jute industry. Chakrabarty then argues that the paucity of documents on the jute workers can be understood only in terms of the disciplinary authority inside the mills. The crucial link here was the *sardar* the nature of whose authority was such that it contributed to the bending of rules and falsifying of documents. Hence the 'gaps' in knowledge. This is followed by a chapter on the 'paradox' of organization among the workers i.e. why in spite of a history of militant struggles, trade unionism remained weak. The ideology of the ruling classes, argues the author, is often crucially modified by the limitations that working class culture sets on that ideology. As long this is not recognized the paradox will persist. Ironically enough, the Bengali left remained trapped, 'within the same culture they would have liked to have seen destroyed.' (p. 154). Protest and authority were deeply ingrained in the culture of the working classes, and the mill managers were a projection of it. Thus physical violence had nothing primitive about it. It should instead be seen as an acknowledgement of the way authority was represented in the mills. Similarly class and community feelings were circumscribed by the existing culture of the workers. In this there was a masked absence of individualism, as opposed to bourgeois culture.

Given the long period covered by the book (1890-1940) the author has forsaken the chronological approach. Instead he takes up certain themes and presents his views on them. Necessarily, therefore the nature of the book has become polemical. This book is well argued and helps us to recognize that beneath the dominant discourse of equality there lurks hierarchy and violence which are the dominant organizing principles of everyday life in our society.

Partho Datta,  
Zakir Hussain College,  
Delhi University, Delhi

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Futile Enquiry*

Maurice A Finocchiaro, *GRAMSCI and the History of Dialectical Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 313, Price £ 30.

A self-confessed 'excessively pedantic style of exposition' is deterrent enough for the reader. When however it is reflective of an excessively pedantic analysis the futility of the attempted enquiry is difficult to conceal. It is more than evident that Finocchiaro's work falls into the latter category.

Gramsci is without doubt a major theoretician of the twentieth century, and since the fifties, the source of an important stream of research, including Marxists, non-Marxists, and even anti-Marxists. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the enormous body of Marxist literature lay in his capacity to exhibit the role of 'partisanship', in the widest sense of the term, as an integral component in the dialectical process of 'making history but not exactly as one pleases'. Marx's distinctive concept of practical-critical activity found powerful explanation in areas ranging from philosophy, politics, economics, history, and culture as Gramsci traced the comprehension of the historically novel in the process of its social creation. His analysis of the 'intellectual function' in social history is unparalleled. Opposition to mechanistic versions of the 'philosophy of praxis' centred on the tendency, encouraged by such attempts, to undermine 'the basis of vital actions'.

Finocchiaro's book, therefore, surprises one when it 'suggests' that Gramsci's 'point is that the dialectician makes his choice with the awareness of all sides; his commitment is presumably to *his* synthesis of the many aspects of the situation. . . the dialectic would then have that much more content, although it would not determine a choice.' Almost to emphasise the distance between this 'intellectualist' approach and Gramsci's own, Gramsci is quoted a couple of pages earlier, asserting that, 'to create a new culture does not mean only to make individually some 'original' discoveries, . . . That a mass of men is led to think coherently and in a unified manner about reality, is a 'philosophical' fact of much greater importance and 'originality' than the discovery by a philosophical 'genius' of a new truth that remains the property of small intellectual groups.'

Focussing attention on the stimulating, if relatively unsystematised, prison writings of Gramsci, Finocchiaro has obviously allowed himself to be drawn into the thankless task of textual systematization with no feel whatsoever for the theoretical richness of Gramsci's prison notebooks. Lacking this intellectual sensitivity while evaluating the 'history of dialectical thought' is nothing short of disaster. Like Gramsci, Hegel, Marx and Croce among others, are denied a significant evaluation of their powerful impact on the history of modern thought.

Copious textual comparisons make only for tiresome reading as they conclude in statements as jarring as the following: 'Gramsci is a Crocean Marxist, whereas Croce is a Marxist of sorts.' Further the book is replete with phrases like, 'Gramsci. . . is trying to elaborate a dialectical concept of politics, that is a concept of dialectical politics.' With some relief one reaches the concluding chapter only to encounter this 'gem':

I hope that besides avoiding monotony, this (the dialectic of attitudes expressed in the chapter sequence) has avoided both confusion and disjointedness, and that it will create a dialectical interplay: for and against Marxism, for and against Gramsci, for and against religion, for and against science, for and against the concept of politics, for and against the synthesis of theory and practice, for and against hermeneutics, for and against the dialectic itself.



Finocchiaro, it would appear, was at least aware of the pitfalls awaiting an enquiry such as his. The tragedy for the reader is that he systematically falls prey to each one of them.

Madhu Prasad  
Zakir Hussain College,  
Delhi University, Delhi.

## **THE KERALA STATE FINANCIAL ENTERPRISES LIMITED**

(A Government of Kerala Undertaking)

Regd. Office: 'Bhadraatha', Trichur: 20

- 
- 
- Don't you want to partake in the Government programme for development of the State?
  - You can do so and at the same time earn a handsome amount by way of interest.
  - KSFE, a Government of Kerala undertaking is accepting deposits at attractive rates of interest. Repayment guaranteed by the Government of Kerala.
    - 1 year upto 2 years : 11%
    - 2 years upto 3 years : 12%
    - 3 years : 13%
  - Amounts accepted in multiples of Rs. 100/-
  - Other Schemes include Sugama Deposits offering 8% interest.
  - KSFE gives financial assistance for household durables, vehicles and employment Oriented Hire Purchase Schemes.
  - Enquire about our perennial Chitty Schemes, Liberalised norms for surety, etc. at our Branches spread throughout Kerala.
- 
- 

**KSFE for Prosperity for all!**



# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

Patents, Brain Drain and Higher Education:  
International Barriers to the Diffusion of Knowledge,  
Information and Technology **Binod Khadria** 3

Labour Migration to the Middle East: A Review of its  
Context, Effects and Prospects **Frans J. Schuurman**  
and **Raouf Salib** 19

Import Substitution and the Structure of the Iranian  
Economy 1962-1977 **Morteza Assadi** 30

Structural Characteristics of the Mexican Economy  
(1942-82) **Mrityunjay Mohanty** 42

DISCUSSION Government Intervention and Industrial  
Restructuring: The Case of South Korea **Jongsoo Park** 65

BOOK REVIEWS 68

# **SOCIAL SCIENTIST**

VOLUME 18

NUMBER 5

MAY 1990

## **ADVISORY EDITORS**

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekedath  
Jacob Eapen

## **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## **CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT**

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

### **Inland**

Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250
(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)	

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R.Krishnan  
D.Raghunandan  
C.Rajamohan  
C.P.Chandrasekhar

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

Rajendra Prasad

## **EDITOR**

Prabhat Patnaik

## **EDITORIAL OFFICE**

424, V.P.House  
New Delhi 110 001

## **Foreign (In US Dollars)**

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

## **NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS**

Due to escalating costs we are constrained to revise the subscription rates for *Social Scientist* from issue nos. 190-191. The revised rates are as follows:

Single Issue	Rs 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual subscription (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual subscription (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual subscription (students)	Rs. 75
Subscription for 2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
Subscription for 3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250

While these rates will come into effect with issue nos. 190-191, those who have already subscribed would continue to get the journal at the old rates till their subscription expires.

Please also note the change in address. The new address is 15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
15/15, Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.

## *Editorial*

With attention focussed the world over on the possibilities for structural reform in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, there has been less discussion of the constraints to such reforms in the developing world emerging from domestic and international inequality. While internal structures have proved a constraint on the successful implementation of import-substituting strategies, the transition to more 'liberal', outward-oriented strategies is proving too costly from the point of view of the pace of development and the distributional implications of even the meagre rates of growth recorded. This issue focuses on some aspects of these difficulties.

In the lead article, Binod Khadria discusses a fall-out of international inequality, viz. the drain of skilled human resources from the developing to the developed world. This drain is ensured by the combination of constraints on the international transfer of technology, set for example by the Paris Convention, and on migration, ensured through immigration laws in the developed countries fine-tuned to selectively permit only such a flow. Given the relation between concerted efforts at indigenous technology generation and the creation of an environment in which locally trained scientific and technical manpower finds fulfillment, any effort to curb the former, as exemplified by the attack on India's Patents Act, only leads to the flow of skilled human resources to locations more suited to their activity, constraining the process of generation of an indigenous technological capability even further. That is the 'brain-drain' not merely aggravates international inequality but is itself accelerated by moves like the recently emphasised trade related intellectual property measures (TRIPs), which constrain the free diffusion of knowledge, information and technology.

Even in instances where solidarity within a section of the Third World permits an international redistribution of income in its favour—a tendency epitomised by the oil price hikes of the 1970s—internal structures and international inequalities soon lead to the dissipation of this advantage, as well as distorted development. The paper by Frans Schuurman and Raouf Salib on labour migration to the Middle East in the aftermath of the oil price hike and that by Morteza Assadi on the development of the Iranian economy, focus on these aspects. Schuurman and Salib survey available studies on the extent of migration, the

transfers within the developing world that this permitted and, above all, on the social, political and economic fall out of these developments in both the emigration and host countries. Besides distorting social structures, adversely affecting the process of nation building and working against the emancipation of women, they also set off processes that render the process of adjustment to reduced oil revenues and migration possibilities extremely difficult.

These kinds of problems operate also in countries which, through a strategy of import substituting industrialization, have built up a diverse and relatively large industrial base. A typical example is Mexico, which went through with an ISI strategy, and garnered substantial gains in terms of rates of growth, but soon ran into bottlenecks emerging from the constraints set by asset and income inequality on the pace of growth of agriculture and the rate of expansion of the domestic market. Further, successful import substitution notwithstanding, the structure of demand was such that imports always outpaced exports leading to severe balance of payments difficulties. Mexico attempted to ride these twin problems by exploiting the advantage provided by the oil price hike and launching on an export-led strategy. However, constraints operating in both international markets and internal supply structures, ensured that imports outpaced exports—a deficit which was financed by the easy access to international liquidity in the wake of the oil shocks. However, once oil prices collapsed, Mexico's ability to service its debts and ensure adequate capital inflows were eroded, necessitating the acceptance of an IMF type austerity package with extremely adverse growth and distributional implications.

BINOD KHADRIA\*

*Patents, Brain Drain and Higher Education:  
International Barriers to the Diffusion of  
Knowledge, Information and Technology\*\**

INTRODUCTION

Empirical information on the transfer of technologies to the Third World in general and India in particular is readily accessible and it is not the idea of this paper to summarise or review that literature here. Similarly, issues current in the area of Patent Laws viz. Trade-Related-Intellectual-Property rights (TRIPs), Trade-Related-Investment-Measures (TRIMs), Trade-in-Services etc. have become well-known, particularly in the wake of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations which is to be concluded by the end of this year.<sup>1</sup> Instead, what this paper attempts is to examine: (a) the likeness between the Patent Laws under the proposed TRIPs system and the Immigration Laws that control what is called the Brain Drain—both pertaining to unequal exchange between the developed and the developing countries, and (b) the fact that the two add to each other as far as their implications for the growth and diffusion of scientific knowledge, information and technology in the Third World is concerned. In other words, what is attempted here is to highlight, within the political economy construct of international economic relations between the Third World and the Developed World, a distinct second source of inequality other than patent laws which is still significantly related to it. Migration of human resources from developing to developed countries is this second source, and it may be argued that it is related to the question of intellectual property rights inherent in patent laws by the fact that in brain drain one is concerned mainly with the movement of that human resource which is capable of generating a body of knowledge that needs to be protected by such rights. Considering human resources to be the prime input in the production of knowledge that forms the very basis of developments in science, technology and information, if the existing world patent law system is visualised as a possible instrument to strengthen the hands of the developed countries vying to capture and monopolise the knowledge that is produced, the

---

\* Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

\*\* An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 'Third-World Patent Convention' organised by the National Working Group on Patent Laws at New Delhi, March 15-16, 1990.

brain drain can perhaps be equated with a process whereby they capture the human resource itself that is input (i.e. the persons producing or capable of producing that knowledge). Moreover, given the fact that the patent regime has degenerated into reserving third world markets for the developed world's manufactured goods rather than protecting the actual interest of the inventive and innovative activities in the Third World, implying thereby that the location of such activities would remain confined to the political or economic boundaries of the developed countries, TRIPs would add to the brain drain of the talented and the ambitious men and women of the Third World to the locales of these activities in the West.

Before I attempt a further elaboration on this presumably new perspective, let me very briefly put the issue of the world patent system in the context of the international transfer of technology.

#### THE PATENT LAWS IN THE REALM OF INTERNATIONAL TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS

The question of political economy of technology transfer from developed to developing countries has mainly been studied under two categories of issues: (1) The suitability or appropriateness of the technology transferred, and (2) The terms and conditions governing the transfer.

With respect to the suitability of any transferred technology to a developing country one would normally come across two main arguments: (a) It is being argued that a technology designed, produced and innovated in a developed country is best suited to the resource endowments and needs of that developed country. It is therefore bound to be ill-suited to both the endowments as well as the needs of the developing country. (b) Imported technologies (whether from a developed or a developing country) are believed to be lacking the full support of modern science (by design and by limited capability respectively) and therefore to act as tools that condemn the third world countries to only second-best technologies. 'Alternative', 'appropriate' or 'intermediate' technologies, as some of the imported technologies are called, are thus suspect excepting when indigenously devised, planned and developed.<sup>2</sup>

While the second argument has often come in the way of a strong TCDC (technological cooperation among developing countries) for the purpose of technological transformation of individual developing countries, the first argument has often been compromised with to import western technology into the developing countries. This is perhaps because many a times the 'suitability' question is overridden by the theory of the 'advantage of the late-comer'. On the other hand, however, because not a large number of later-developing countries have shown signs of being able to fruitfully utilize the world stock of technical and scientific knowledge to industrialize, the technology transfer debate now clusters around the terms and conditions governing the transaction rather than the suitability or appropriateness of what

is being transacted. The patent laws question under the TRIP negotiations is now central to this discussion on the terms and conditions of technology transfer.

Details of this debate in India are available in some of the most recent writings on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Briefly, the terms and conditions governing the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries are linked with the nature of the world market for technology and the place that developing countries occupy in that market. Interestingly enough, it has over time been discovered that there is in fact no genuine economic market for technology transfer; everything from price to quantity to quality is being determined by the relative bargaining strengths and skills of the negotiating parties rather than by market demand and supply. Here the developing countries face an unequal position favouring the developed countries, and the most aggravating factor of this inequality is the insensitive operation of the intellectual property rights system governing patents and trademarks and legitimized initially by the Paris Convention or the Protection of Industrial Property, 1883.

The asymmetry between the developed and the developing countries with respect to the impact of the patent laws has, however, been restricted somewhat by the fact that some sixty developing countries including India are not signatories of the Paris Treaty. But, on the other hand, the Paris Convention of 1883 still governs the policies of a majority of these countries, one amongst the exceptions being India.

#### THE TRIPS PROPOSAL

To make these countries fall in line with the rest, the developed countries, on the basis of their overriding bargaining strength, made submissions in the Uruguay Round of GATT in 1986 that intellectual property rights be brought under the purview of the GATT (i.e. General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade) and thereby suggested the establishment of the TRIPs (i.e. trade-related intellectual property rights).

Without entering into a discussion on the details of the TRIPs proposal it can be mentioned that a drastic change advocated by it is to abolish the provisions which exclude certain products and processes from protection and to extend the copyright coverage to computer software, data based and related software; and patent protection to pharmaceuticals and chemical processes, and the plant and animal products generated by biotechnology and genetic engineering.

The TRIPs proposal basically reflects the fear of the developed-country firms as well as governments that the new technological breakthrough in electronics, information and technology—these being highly human-capital or skill-intensive would be copied or simulated and eventually mastered by the developing countries, at least by those having a variegated structure of higher education and hence an edge in skill formation, such as India, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea etc. An open access to the new technology, the developed countries fear, offers

unprecedented opportunity to these developing countries for becoming the *true* 'late-comers' in technological transformation and to weaken the very foundations of developed countries' patent monopolies.

In view of the expressed objective of self-reliant technological development and industrial growth, India's position has been expected to be clearly against joining the Paris Convention as well as submitting to the proposal of the TRIPs system. India's actual position in the TRIPs negotiations has been more mixed though, and it has been alleged that this was so for the purpose of accommodating a certain class of business interests at home.<sup>4</sup> What is, however, clearer than such allegations, which themselves might be a diverting tactic by the developed countries, are the political and economic pressures on dissenting and leading developing nations put by the developed countries. For example, there is the incident of India, along with Brazil and Japan, being recently named in the hit list of the US Trade Law Super 301. One reason for such acts of the US is believed to be the fact that the TRIPs proposal of the Uruguay Round as mooted by the developed countries was designed under the leadership of the USA.

#### THE REVERSE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY THROUGH BRAIN DRAIN

Interestingly, the point about the fear of the developed countries that the Third World would shirk-off its dependence on the First World by dint of a potential capability in HRD (human resource development) leads on to the second source of inequality in international technology transfer mentioned earlier. This is the phenomenon of Reverse Transfer of Technology through migration of skilled and educated manpower from the developing to the developed countries, popularly known as the brain drain.<sup>5</sup> If the intellectual property rights system can be viewed as one facet of the developed countries' neo-colonial technological exploitation of the developing countries, then the brain drain can perhaps be viewed as another facet. It may be alleged that the developed countries, in effect, rob the Third World of the benefits of human capital in two ways: through the patent laws they stop the free flow of knowledge into and amongst the Third World, and through brain drain they deplete them of their most valuable resource in the generation of that knowledge, viz. the highly qualified manpower.

Closely associated with the transfer of technology is the transfer of skills to *developing countries*—so as to optimally utilize the transferred technology and generate the capability to do so by training of local manpower. Despite the recognized need for such transfer of skills of technologically advanced nations to those lagging behind, most of the flow—as far as skilled labour is concerned—has been in the reverse direction. Brain drain, as this reverse flow is known, beginning slowly in the 1950s and 'understood' to have reached its peak in the mid-1970s however, *still continues* in gigantic proportions.



Table 1 shows how the shares of Asia, and to some extent Africa too, in the US immigration have grown between 1961 and 1987. European immigration to the US declined absolutely from an annual average of 122 thousand persons during 1961-65 to a figure of 104 thousand during 1966-76 and further to 66 thousand during 1977-87 whereas Asian immigration to the US registered not only a four-and-a-half fold increase from 22 thousand in 1961-65 to 99 thousand during 1966-76 but a further two-and-a-half times rise in immigration during 1977-87 over 1966-76, i.e. to an average annual figure of 249 thousand. In relative terms too, the latter surpassed the former. During 1961-65, their percentage share ratio was 42:8 percentage points. This altered to an almost equal shares in the percentage points ratio of 27:26 in the 1966-76 period. What is even more significant is that during the later period of 1977-87 these shares reversed to a ratio of 12:45. Remarkably enough, even the ratio between North America (which includes such giants as Mexico and Canada so far as migration to the US is concerned) and Asia reversed from 41:8 during 1961-65 and 39:26 during 1966-76 to 33:45 during 1977-87!

Table 1  
Annual Average Immigration to the United States  
by Region of Origin: 1961-65, 1966-76, 1977-87

Region	1961-65		1966-76		1977-87	
	Annual Average	Percent	Annual Average	Percent	Annual Average	Percent
Europe	122,155	42.1	103,798	27.1	65,610	11.7
Asia	21,611	7.5	99,264	25.9	248,651	44.6
Africa	2,564	0.9	6,101	1.6	14,615	2.6
Oceania	1,307	0.5	2,911	0.7	4,016	0.7
North America	118,804	41.0	148,616	38.8	185,497	33.3
South America	23,609	8.1	21,692	5.6	38,182	6.8
Other	13	—	3	—	8	—
Total	290,062	100.0	382,387	100.0	556,579	100.0

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports and Statistical Yearbooks*, various years.

In other words, there is hard evidence to prove that the Third-World immigration to the US has represented higher and higher proportions of the overall American intake of immigrant manpower during 1966-87 as compared to the 1961-65 period. However, a large part of the 'quality' component of this rising intake of human capital from the Third World has been made 'invisible', as explained later, by means of certain changes in the immigration law of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving aside the causes of such brain drain, what is extraordinary about the phenomenon is its scale and directional asymmetry, corresponding to the asymmetry represented by technological dependence of the developing on the developed nations. Though representing a

reverse transfer of technology in the direction opposite to technological dependence, following Sen, it may, be emphasized that it is in fact a reflection of the same phenomenon: 'The economically and technologically advanced metropolis provides a more acceptable habitat for skilled labour than the poor developing countries are in a position to provide'.<sup>7</sup> What is appalling about it is the way in which the developed countries have been able to utilize their advantageous position to derive economic benefits for themselves, but at the cost of immiserizing the developing countries. The question of making any substantial contribution to the technological capability of the developing countries has remained a far cry in this relationship.

The losses incurred by the developing countries on account of the 'skill loss' and the 'investment loss' through brain drain are normally brushed aside as supply-side problems with zero opportunity costs when it is respectively argued that there is little evidence for the assertion that emigrating members of a particular skill category are the most able in that category, one that because past historical costs are not policy variables but 'dead wood' investment losses are sunk 'deadweights'. According to Sen, none of these two arguments would cover much ground. While excess supply of manpower in many developing countries is a generally visible phenomenon, specific shortages can be identified by introducing proper skill classifications as, for example, suggested later. Moreover, it is not always the unemployed and the 'excess' who migrate creating no problems of destabilisation to people and production around. Secondly, the investment loss is not the once-for-all historical cost of training the 'excess' population on the national labour market; it is also of the continuing costs of educating a chain of people when migration becomes an on-going, demand-determined phenomenon.<sup>8</sup>

There have been various suggestions on how to deal with the phenomenon of brain drain from the developing countries, some aimed at stopping or reducing brain drain and others aimed at making the best possible economic gain out of it.<sup>9</sup> Examples in the first category are a ban on exit itself or imposition of a prohibitive exit tax; in the second category is the proposal to tax emigrant manpower on a continuing basis for a fixed period with the help of the receiving countries.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the fundamental question of violating personal liberty, difficulties of administration and uncertainty of getting positive results, such schemes are all aimed at noosing the micro-beneficiary of the brain drain phenomenon viz. the migrating citizens of the developing countries themselves. The actual macro-beneficiary i.e., the receiving developed countries that reap all the benefits of developing countries' subsidized higher education, get away unscathed in these schemes.

This is not to deny the positive effects of brain drain on the sending countries—e.g. reduction in unemployment, foreign exchange earnings through remittances, and, above all, the 'nexus' for technological

information flow. Migration with such welfare-neutral or welfare-positive outcome is more akin to what I have elsewhere termed as 'brain-overflow' or 'brain-export' than to 'brain-drain' *per se*.<sup>11</sup> What is disturbing about not only brain drain *per se*, but skill migration as a whole (i.e. inclusive of brain overflow and brain-export) is its instability that has adversely affected long-term technical-manpower planning in the developing countries like India. Such instability mainly arises from the fact that the developed countries, while altering their immigration policies, have treated the developing countries' brain drain merely as 'safety valve', without giving much consideration to the problems it creates for the latter's educational and HRD plans and programmes.

Short of a complete technological transformation of developing countries being achieved i.e. when development of technological capability and creation of conditions in which skilled manpower finds fulfillment (rather than an urge for emigrating) mutually support each other, brain drain will continue to haunt the Third World countries. In the new patent regime proposed under the TRIPs system, the possibility of such transformation taking place within a reasonable period of time would be extremely low because indigenous R&D supposedly more beneficial to the Third World countries would be stifled by the patents that the developed countries would have monopolized by TRIPs. As a result, the brain drain situation would be further worsened because the aspiring and the ambitious talents of the third world would move to the developed world in search of modern laboratories and other facilities of frontier research. A vicious cycle of stifled activity of knowledge generation in the third world (due to patents) adding to the brain drain, and the drain from the Third World countries (due to lack of frontier opportunities) adding to the restricted generation of knowledge there (because the qualified manpower is no longer available within) would thus be set in full motion.

Talking of the brain drain as such, the developing countries have been trying to grapple with it through inward-looking and outward-looking policies. Through inward-looking policies, countries like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have taken measures in remittance management; whereas other countries like the Philippines and Korea have depended on outward-looking policies of exporting their manpower through a project-package approach under turnkey investments abroad. But neither type of approach has strengthened the bargaining position of these countries so far as technology transfer *through trade with developed countries* is concerned. What is rather unfortunate is that the developing countries (including India) (a) have not taken any concrete steps to change the asymmetry of the directional flow of brain drain for encouraging co-operative exchange of skills amongst the developing nations, nor (b) have they tried to use brain drain as an instrument of bargaining in trade negotiations with the developed countries even though it is well-recognised that human

resource is a factor vitally related to the development of technological, scientific and other services. And now they are faced with the TRIPs proposal for patent laws that could aggravate their brain drain problem further.

On the whole, the developed countries seem to have been successfully playing the political economy game by keeping technology issues highly dispersed and disjointed, as in the case of the patent system and brain drain. The developing countries, on their part, have been unable—either individually or in unison—to see in totality the arena of science and technology so as to weigh at the same time their own strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis the developed countries. The policy options that India as a leading Third World country can develop and initiate in this context are discussed below.

#### THE INDIAN PATENT ACT AND THE SCOPE FOR STRENGTHENING NEGOTIATING SKILLS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

One positive effect of India's policy of self-reliance as reflected in the Indian Patent Act of 1970 has however been that the trends of Indian patents sealed by Indian and foreign inventors have more or less kept pace with each other. Although the patents sealed by Indian inventors are still far out-numbered by those sealed by the foreign inventors, and although processes are not non-patentable, the gap (i.e. the difference between the number of patents sealed by the foreign and the Indian inventors respectively) seems to have declined considerably in the eighties as compared to the seventies (e.g. to a low average annual figure of 648 during 1980–86 from a high of 1127 during 1927–80) as per the data presented in Table 2. In view of the long-nurtured and strong patent policy for the development of technology indigenously by import substitution, India is now faced with a crucial decision whether to give in to the pressures of the developed countries or to brace itself up for confronting the TRIPs proposal in the seventh revision of the Paris Convention through GATT. It would be not only the future of Indian science and technology alone but that of a large number of developing countries too that would depend on what position India *finally* takes. India has to, in effect, choose between dogging an attractive but imaginary prospect of equitable North-South co-operation and towing a slow but steady South-South cooperation. The first choice would obviously be a tricky and uncertain one and the first signs of its being so have already shown in the 'incident' of America's listing India under the Super 301 clause of the U.S. Trade Law mentioned earlier. About the second choice of South-South Co-operation, particularly TCDC (Technological Co-operation among Developing Countries), what is required as the very first step is to strengthen the international negotiating capabilities of the Third World so as to convincingly demolish the kind of arguments favouring the TRIPs proposal.

Table 2  
Number of Indian Patents Sealed by Indian and  
Foreign Inventors for the years 1972-73 through 1985-86

Year	Number of Patents Sealed			
	Indian	Foreign	Total	Gap (Indian minus Foreign)
1972-73	278	1064	1342	-786
1973-74	358	1058	1416	-700
1974-75	737	3207	3944	-2470
1975-76	426	1894	2320	-1468
1976-77	928	1964	2892	-1036
1977-78	657	1857	2514	-1200
1978-79	281	499	780	-218
1979-80	516	1657	2173	-1141
1980-81	349	670	1019	-321
1981-82	421	936	1357	-515
1982-83	405	822	1227	-417
1983-84	340	980	1320	-640
1984-85	263	1206	1469	-943
1985-86	451	1500	1951	-1049

Sources: 1. Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks.  
2. STS Division, Department of Science & Technology.

The cornerstone of international technological cooperation for the development of Third World countries seems to be the bilateral and multilateral negotiations with the developed countries. As it has already been mentioned, because there is no genuine economic market in technology, transactions depend on the negotiating skill and strength of the participating parties. The developing countries will need to inculcate both. The bargaining strength of Third World countries can be strengthened by collaboration with each other (TCDC), e.g. by joint negotiations to stop one host country from being played off against another, supported by joint information networks and search mechanisms for alternative sources of technology. Similarly, the negotiating skills ought to be improved by practice and popularization of what Sen prescribed as the 'adversary analysis', rather than by the standard cost-benefit analysis.<sup>12</sup> The advantage with the former is that by placing oneself in the position of one's adversary (i.e. the supplier of technology or the foreign investing firm in the present context) and seeing what things look like from the other end of the negotiating table it is possible to know what both parties will get out of the deal. When it turns out that the proposal under consideration is very rewarding for the foreign party, the adversary analysis also leads to an alternative deal that is more favourable to the receiving country.

However, the necessary information for undertaking adversary analysis is not as easy to get hold of as it sounds; access to information is also dependent on the negotiating strength, particularly because the ability to get hold of the information is not independent of the efforts

to get it, which ultimately relates to the understanding that such information is relevant. In such a situation, the deal often tends to be unfavourable to the developing countries because the two sides have possibly met round the negotiating table totally as unequals—'one well briefed on the commodity that is being sold and on the interests of both parties, the other whistling in the dark'.<sup>13</sup>

What is required of the developing countries is thus efficient selection, evaluation and negotiations for technology acquisition followed by its useful assimilation and development for indigenous technological transformation. The question is whether India has the ability to be a frontliner in generating these capabilities in the Third World. Here, India has to be recognized as one of those unusual cases where there has been little correspondence between the configuration of incomes and the growth of technological capacity. Despite widespread poverty and unequal standards of living, it has been able to advance the frontiers of modern science and technology.<sup>14</sup> Out of the three prerequisites of technology transfer viz. information banks, training institutions for international negotiations, and R and D funding, India has the potential to at least provide the initial infrastructure to developing countries for the first two. For example, India can further develop the UNCTAD and UNIDO sponsored regional technology transfer centre in Bangalore and link it up with the Andean Technological Information Service, the Latin American Technological Information Network, the International Mechanism for Appropriate Technology sponsored by the Dutch government, and, at the world level, with the Technological Information Exchange System (TIES) for technological information flow to developing countries, particularly in South Asia. Following the training courses of the United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations for training people in international negotiations, India with its vast structure of formal higher education can popularize such courses in Universities and research institutions particularly for sponsored students from various developing countries.

Once these two objectives of information and training are accomplished for strengthening the negotiating power of the Third World countries, the R and D funding position may also be eased by effectively pressing for the three demands that are usually suggested in this connection:<sup>15</sup>

- (1) A financial contribution by TNCs to the R&D funds of their host governments to more or less compensate for the latter's contribution through royalties, transfer pricing, etc. to the R&D at TNC headquarters; and above all the brain drain.
- (2) The reservation of an agreed small percentage of the R&D facilities of the Corporations to help solve technical problems at the request of the Third World host governments (in line with Target III of the UN World Plan of Action).

- (3) Stepped-up action by the corporations to improve the technology of their smaller local suppliers and sub-contractors, preferably not only in respect of their own specific requirements but as a contribution to their general technological development.

Apart from helping to consolidate R&D expenditure at the level of one per cent of GNP of the developing countries, as was prescribed by the World Plan of Action for the decade of the 1970s itself, these measures would be more suitable to the developing countries, attempting to come out of their technological dependence on the developed countries.

#### THE US IMMIGRATION LAWS IN THE REALM OF INDIA'S BRAIN DRAIN

Though migration of unskilled labour from India had become a century-old tradition at the time of independence, the post-independence migration of Indians to developed countries was characterised by break from the past. The new migrants from independent India were overwhelmingly persons with technical and scientific skills, e.g. scientists, engineers, doctors, teachers etc. Because these migrants incorporated the elements of 'human capital' generated through investment in education and/or training and because their emigration implied a loss to India, it comprised India's brain drain. Starting in the direction of England and Europe, its flow shifted mainly towards the USA since the mid-1960s.

India as well as other emigration countries of the Third World have widely believed in the developed countries' argument that brain drain is a supply-side problem, created by the over-supply of educated manpower in the concerned developing countries. Contrary to this belief, however, it needs to be emphasized that a major part of India's brain drain (and a number of other developing countries' brain drain too) is demand-determined, i.e. governed by the manpower requirements of the host economy—and controlled by the Immigration Laws of the developed host countries.<sup>16</sup> It has been treated more as their (developed countries') own 'safety-valve' rather than of the developing countries. Depending upon the technological needs and sociological factors prevailing or developing in the host country, developed receiving countries have generated Immigration Laws that are liberal, selective, restrictive or even prohibitive for the Third World entrants at different times.<sup>17</sup> Manpower planners and decision makers in India (as in many other developing countries too) have so far failed to perceive fully the implications of this, and many of the unanticipated and destabilizing results of India's brain drain could in fact be attributed to this lack of perception only.

The Indian planner, however, cannot be entirely blamed for such lack of vision. The receiving developed country often finds it a convenient option to enact immigration laws which are selectively

more humanitarian looking rather than talent absorbing by a marginal manipulation of its safety valve without actually lowering the flow involved in the developing country's brain drain. For example, if we look at Tables 3 and 4, we may find that India's brain drain to the USA has come down from a range of 15–19 per cent of total migration in the 1970s to within the range of 5–9 per cent in the 1980s, and contrarily migration for 'family reunification' has gone up, although total number of migrants has risen steadily. Interestingly, this is an 'illusion' that has followed from a less-obvious implication of the change in emphasis of the US immigration system from 'occupational preference' to 'family preference' category of entrants after the mid 1970s. Since there were a limited number of Indians in the US in 1965, the initial migrants willing to leave India were 'pulled' and admitted into the USA under occupational preference categories. Later i.e. after the mid-1970s, Indians still entered, but under the family reunification categories (imagine the counterpart of Table 4 given Table 3). This, however, would not mean that these later immigrants from India were less educated or poorly qualified to occupy high positions in the US economy. Rather it has been confirmed that 'many of them came from families of individuals who came under work related preferences and hence were likely to be well trained themselves'.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of sound and systematic migration statistics of our own, this however could not be measured easily and the Indian planner fell prey to the belief that the brain drain from India was in fact subsiding.

Table 3  
Indian Immigration to the United States<sup>(a)</sup>: 1940–1987

Year	Numbers	Year	Numbers	Year	Numbers	Year	Numbers	Year	Numbers
1940	52	1950	121	1960	391	1970	10,114	1980	22,607
1941	94	1951	109	1961	421	1971	14,317	1981	21,522
1942	36	1952	123	1962	545	1972	16,929	1982	21,738
1943	71	1953	104	1963	1,173	1973	13,128	1983	25,451
1944	41	1954	144	1964	634	1974	12,795	1984	24,964
1945	103	1955	194	1965	582	1975	15,785	1985	26,026
1946	425	1956	185	1966	2,458	1976	17,500	1986	26,227
						1976TQ	4,572		
1947	432	1957	196	1967	4,642	1977	18,636	1987	27,803
1948	263	1958	323	1968	4,682	1978	20,772	1988	n.a.
1949	175	1959	351	1969	5,963	1979	19,717	1989	n.a.

(a) Immigrants are classified as Indians by last permanent residence from 1940 to 1959 and by birth from 1960 to 1987. Figures are inclusive of both 'new-arrival' and 'adjusted' immigrants—both 'subject to' and 'exempt from' numerical limitations of the U.S. immigration law.

TQ: Translation Quarter i.e. three months from July to September, 1976.

Source: Compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service data.



Table 4  
Immigrants Admitted into the U.S.A. under Third and Sixth Occupational  
Preferences: 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1986, 1987  
(percent of total immigrants)

Region and Country of birth	Year of admission					
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986	1987
All Immigrants	8.4 <sup>(a)</sup>	7.0 <sup>(a)</sup>	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
Asia	12.8	8.4	3.2	4.1	4.1	4.1
India	14.8	18.6	7.7	7.0	4.9	9.1
Korea	6.9	6.7	1.0	2.6	2.8	1.1
Philippines	20.5	11.7	0.3	2.7	2.7	3.0
Latin America <sup>(b)</sup>	n.a.	n.a.	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.4
Mexico	n.a.	n.a.	0.1	1.5	1.4	1.2

(a) Eastern Hemisphere only, i.e. excluding Latin America and, therefore, also Mexico.  
n.a. stands for not available

(b) Latin America includes Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

*Note:* Figures are for 'principals' only i.e. they do not include the spouses and children of these principal immigrants who are permitted to enter the U.S. under the same preference categories.

*Sources:* 1. Bouvier and Gardner (1986),  
2. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*, 1970 and 1975, and  
3. *Statistical Yearbooks*, 1980, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Whatever little data that have now been generated at the micro-level confirm that the brain drain from India to the West, primarily North America (USA and Canada), has continued unabated.<sup>19</sup> For example, roughly one-fourth of all Indian IIT B. Tech. graduates so far produced are reported to have found their place in the brain drain. The statistics on brain drain of IIT Madras B. Tech. graduates is in fact alarming. Since its inception in 1959, 26 per cent of IIT Madras graduates have migrated. The extent of migration has steadily increased from 20 per cent for the period 1968-72, to 35 per cent for the period 1983-87. Discipline wise, it varies from a minimum of 18.4 per cent in aerospace engineering to a maximum of 44.6 per cent in chemical engineering. Amongst the two batches of new-technology-related computer-science graduates of 1986 and 1987, brain drain has been as high as 58.5 per cent!

Thus, despite the fact that India not only commands the third largest pool of scientific and technical manpower in the world but also makes available the services of its skilled human resources for scientific and technological R&D activities in developed countries through brain drain (approximately 20 per cent of this stock), India has neither used it as an instrument of bargaining in bilateral trade negotiations including those for technology transfer, nor given leadership to developing countries for such a move in multilateral negotiations by encouraging cooperative exchange of skills amongst

developing countries (even as part of TCDC) for their technological transformation.

#### SOUTH-SOUTH CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

India being the largest source of 'brain drain' can thus perhaps provide the leadership in making migration of Third-World scientific and technical manpower to developed countries an instrument of international bargaining. The objective may be two-fold: first, to counter the highly unfavourable TRIPs proposal and get a more favourable deal in the trade of commodities and technology; and second, to guarantee international demand stabilization for the migrating manpower by incorporating brain drain as a component of trade in services.

In achieving these goals by using migration as an instrument in trade negotiation, India could possibly try to get its higher education and skill-formation structure recognized as a service industry (rather than public utility), in which it holds the comparative advantage over developed countries when 'trade' in technology-related manpower is opened up through migration. To do this, India has to first encourage cooperative exchange of skills amongst developing countries so as to meet the critical shortages of manpower in some developing countries and mitigate surpluses in others.<sup>20</sup> In fact, this would also help crystallize the advantages that broad-based higher education structures would potentially possess due to public subsidization in countries like India, otherwise severely criticised and advised to be 'privatised' often by the international agencies.<sup>21</sup> Apart from boosting the technological capability of skill-short countries, this would also deter the Third World countries from competing against each other in offering exemptions and preferential treatment to developed countries, say with regard to the patent laws.

Having accomplished such South-South Co-operation in education and training, India can hopefully devise a truly 'human capital' approach to brain drain by incorporating skills as differentiated output of a service industry called 'education'. This can be done by following a generic classification of skills with categories like creators, teachers, managers, operators, workers, etc. rather than an occupational spectrum of manpower with ex post (i.e. after skill formation has taken place) categories like engineers, scientists, doctors, technicians, nurses etc. This would also help identify relative comparative manpower stock positions of different countries, because it would then be possible to tide over, partly if not wholly, the problem of aggregation that one confronts in drawing a macro-economic picture of a country's human capital stock. Once this is done, 'brain drain', which is controlled by Immigration Laws of the developed countries can be turned into 'trade in technological services' under the control of the departments of labour, science and technology, education, and international trade of the participating countries. This, supplemented by the improved negotiating skills, should go a long way in countering the domineering

tendencies of the developed countries—inherent not only in their attempts to unilaterally control the terms and conditions of technology transfers but even in moves that could stifle autonomous growth of knowledge and/or diffusion of information, e.g. through instruments like the proposed TRIPs system. In fact, this should also forestall the world patent system from further widening the 'drain' through which the Third World loses its 'brains'.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For the history and other analytical details of these negotiations involving both the developed—and the developing country interests, see C. Raghavan, *Recolonization : GATT, Uruguay Round and the Third World*, Third World Network, Penang, 1990.
2. See H.W. Singer, 'Transfer of Technology—A One-way Street', *Internationale Entwicklung*, A. Mukherji, 'Formation and Efficient Utilization of skilled manpower and its Role in Technological Transformation', World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER)/UNU, mimeo, 1987.
3. For example, see S.J. Patel, 'Trade-Related Intellectual Property in Uruguay Round in GATT', Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1988; A.V. Desai, 'India and the Uruguay Round', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, Nos. 45-47, Special Number, 1988; N.N. Mehrotra, 'Patents Act and Technological Self-Reliance: The Indian Pharmaceutical Industry', and C. Niranjan Rao, 'Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights: Questions of Patents' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 19, 1989. See also two collections of seminar papers and proceedings published by the National Working Group on Patent Laws, New Delhi, viz. *Conquest by Patents: On Patent Law and Policy*, 1988 and *Science, Technology and Patents*, 1989; and *Mainstream: Special Issue on Patent System*, March 17, 1990; 'Document : New Delhi Declaration of Third-World Patent Convention', *Mainstream*, Vol. 28, No. 23, March 31, 1990.
4. See a report by B.M., 'Intellectual Property Rights: Government Buckles under U.S. Pressure', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 19, 1989.
5. The phrase 'Reverse Transfer of Technology' was initially used by UNCTAD; see UNCTAD, 'Reverse Transfer of Technology: Its Dimensions, Economic Effects and Policy Implications, TD/B/C.6/7, UNCTAD Secretariat, Geneva, 1977.
6. This has been discussed at length in B. Khadria, 'Migration of Human Capital to the United States—India's Brain Drain (or Call A Rose by Any Other Name)', *Working Paper Series No. SSS/1989/9*, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1989; also forthcoming in *Economic and Political Weekly*.
7. A.K. Sen, 'Labour and Technology' in J. Cody, H. Hughes and D. Wall, eds., *Policies for Industrial Progress in Developing Countries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980.
8. *Ibid.*
9. A survey of these policy recommendations is available in B. Khadria, *Types of Brain Migrations : A Welfare Economic Classification with Implications for Brain Drain from LDCs*, unpublished M. Phil. diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1978.
10. For various details of such a tax proposal, see J.N. Bhagwati and M. Partington, eds., *Taxing the Brain Drain : A Proposal*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1976.
11. B. Khadria, 'Brain Drain—The Missing Perspective : A Comment', *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 4, No.1, New Delhi, 1978. See also the reference cited in note 9 above.
12. A.K. Sen, *op.cit.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. See T. Majumdar et al, *op.cit.*, and B. Khadria, 'Science, Technology and Human Capital' in T. Majumdar, ed., *Nature, Man and the Indian Economy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, forthcoming.
15. The three demands listed here are as given in H.W. Singer, *op.cit.*

18 SOCIAL SCIENTIST

16. B. Khadria, 'International Migration of Skilled Manpower—The Perspective of A Demand—Side Analysis', Paper presented at the Nineteenth Summer Seminar on Population, East-West Population Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, 1988.
17. In the context of the Indo-American migration, this dimension is highlighted in B. Khadria, 'Contemporary Indian Immigration to the United States—Is the Brain Drain Over?' *Revue Europeenne Des Migrations Internationales*, Poitiers, France, Forthcoming (in French).
18. L.F. Bouvier and R.W. Gardner, 'Immigration to the U.S.—The Unfinished Story', *Population Bulletin*, Vol. 41, No. 4, November, 1986.
19. See IIT, Bombay, *Pilot study on Magnitude and Nature of the Brain Drain of Graduates of the IIT, Bombay*, Study sponsored by DST, GOI, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay 1987; and IIT, Madras, *Data-Base for Brain Drain : Institution-Based Study*, study sponsored by DST, GOI, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, 1989.
20. For a quantitative account of the recent advances made by the developing countries in the field of skill formation, see S.J. Patel, 'The Swift Narrowing of the Educational Distance between the Developed Countries and the Third World', *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 10, No.3 New Delhi, 1985.
21. For detailed analyses of these critiques, the advice and their policy implications for the Third World in general and India in particular, refer respectively to, B. Khadria, 'The Subsidies Question in Higher Education: Tight-Rope Walking for Public Policy Makers in Developing Countries', *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, NIEPA, 1989; and B. Khadria, 'Privatisation of Higher Education', *Mainstream*, Vol. 28, Nos. 25 and 26, April 7 and 14, 1990.

FRANS J. SCHUURMAN \*  
RAOUF SALIB \*\*

## *Labour Migration to the Middle East: A Review of its Context, Effects and Prospects*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the first problems one faces when analyzing the phenomenon of international labor migration to the oil countries in the Middle East, is the absence of a reliable estimate of the number of people involved. Estimates in the labor-importing countries as well as in the labor-exporting countries vary over a wide range. In Egypt for example, one of the major exporters of labor, estimates vary from 1 million to 4.5 million inhabitants working in the oil countries. A recent, fairly reliable estimate based on a large-scale survey (Fergany, 1988) shows 1.5 million Egyptians working in the oil countries, accompanied by a quarter of a million relatives.

Nor do the statistics in the labor-importing countries excel in reliability. Quite apart from the general problems with census material in the Third World, there are primarily three factors which are responsible for this lack of reliable information.

In the first place, one has to realize that the import of (often) a sizeable number of foreign workers, is not something which the various governments want to stress with an exact count of heads. Especially in those states, where 50 to 80 per cent of the population consists of foreigners, governments fear unrest within the national part of the population if these figures became publicly known. Secondly, many workers are brought into the country by a labor broker (called 'kafil' in Saudi Arabia) without official registration, though in some cases (e.g. Egyptians migrating to Iraq) official visas are not required. Also, in some cases, there is another type of non-registered immigration resulting from the fact that frontiers either do not exist or in case they do, can easily be crossed due to lack of control (e.g. the border between the two Yemens and Oman).

---

\* University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands

\*\* General Organization of Housing Building and Planning Research, Cairo, Egypt

In the third place, there is naturalization which makes it impossible to track the number of immigrant workers, because they now have the nationality of their new mother country.

Comparing the figures mentioned in various publications it seems that a reasonable estimate for 1985 would be the presence of 10 million immigrants in the Middle East. About 55 per cent of these came from other Arab countries in the Middle East.

About 40 per cent of the population in the oil countries of the Middle East are immigrants, and in some countries this percentage goes up to 80 per cent. There is a remarkable difference with the situation in 1975 when there were 'only' 3 million immigrants (25 per cent of the total population) of which 65 per cent were Arabs.

An additional issue to take into account is that the aforementioned figures are static i.e. the result of a count at a certain moment in time. The number of people who over the years have participated in labor migration to the oil countries is of course larger. For example, for Egypt the estimate is that between 1974 and 1984 about 3.5 million people participated in the migration process of which 2.8 million were labourers and the remaining consisted of accompanying relatives (Fergany, 1988).

#### THE POLITICO-ECONOMICAL CONTEXT

Basically, the large scale international labor migration to the oil countries in the Middle East can be accounted for by the existence of, on the one hand, oil-producing countries with a relatively small population, and, on the other, the non-(or hardly) oil producing countries (also in the Middle East or in South Asia and East Asia) with a large population. The first category of countries consists of Saudi Arabia (7 millions inhabitants), Kuwait (1.3 million), the United Arab Emirates (UAE, 1 million), Oman (0.8 million) and Libya (3 million). These countries have an average income per capita of US\$ 16,000 per year. The second category consists of countries like Egypt (with 47 million inhabitants), North Yemen (6 million), South Yemen (2 million), Jordan (3 million), Lebanon (3 million), and Syria (9 million). The average yearly income in these countries is about US\$ 700 per capita.

The aforementioned fast growth between 1975 and 1985 of migrant workers is directly related to the explosive increase of oil prices from 1973 onwards. In 1973 the price of a barrel was only US\$1.83, two years later it was up to US\$11.5. With leaps and bounds it grew to US\$26 in 1979 and to US\$34 by the end of 1981. In 1970 the revenues for the oil producing countries in the Middle East amounted to US\$5 billion, in 1980 it had grown to US\$200 billion. Just for Saudi Arabia alone the revenue in this period of ten years went up from US\$1 billion to US\$100 billion.

At the same time the debts of the poor Arabian countries increased steadily. Egypt's foreign debt increased from US\$2 billion in 1970

(representing 24 per cent of the GNP) to US\$ 11 billion in 1980 and to about US\$ 40 billion in 1988. Yemen's foreign debts increased four hundred fold in those ten years. The already existing income gap between the Arabian OPEC-countries and the other Arabian countries increased fivefold.

As we do not want to enter into the discussion about the exact circumstances resulting in the sudden increase of the oil price in the mid-1970s, we limit ourselves to pointing out that this increase came as a blessing in disguise for American industries which were at that time losing international competitiveness. The fast rising oil price dealt a severe blow to the European and Japanese economies, whereas, in contrast, the United States can rely on its own oil production.

The gigantic amount of foreign currency was primarily used to invest in infrastructural projects, industrial development, the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus and the building up of the social security system.

What is important to keep in mind is the basic characteristic of the politico-economic systems in these oil producing countries. Through the ages the control over the irrigation works resulted in despotic regimes which were effective in systematizing the tax system to maintain the hydraulic system and to form a military defense system. Already in an early stage, this led to the existence of a rent economy in which the income of the ruling class was a function of rent titles. These titles (which enabled one to claim a part of the agricultural output) could be bought and sold and as such the system showed capitalist tendencies. The process of selling and buying rent titles made extensive use of middlemen in order for anonymity to be guaranteed. This was important in countries where the regimes had a rather fickle character.

In a country which is characterized by rent capitalism there is in general no urge to reinvest profits, the only accumulation which takes place is the accumulation of rent. There is a major contrast with the development of capitalism in Western Europe where the capitalist bourgeoisie pressed for political reforms in order to remove the barriers to re-investment.

As such feudal elements tended to disappear, while in a country like Saudi Arabia only in 1962 was slavery officially abolished. In addition rent capitalism tends to show much corruption, patronage, intrigues and a general lack of legal protection.

It is important to realize that basically the new oil wealth in the Middle East is a variant of the former rent capitalist system. The oil revenues also are a form of rent, a groundrent that ensures an income which is not the result of a productive activity in the sense of changing a natural product into a consumption good. This rent element is plainly illustrated by the fact that if you do not have oil it is impossible to produce it through capitalist investment. It is not only the major oil producing countries which have rent capitalist features within their economies. A minor oil producer like Egypt also has many rent

capitalist features. Besides a very modest oil production, the major part of the Egyptian GNP comes from revenues of the Suez Canal, tourism, remittances from the Egyptians working in the Arabian Peninsula and foreign aid, i.e. incomes brought about by non-productive activities, in other words: rent.

This relatively huge dependence on rent, explains what is going on in the major oil producing countries of the OPEC. The rent is used to build up factories which operate far below their capacity, the bureaucratic apparatus is enormously extended, there are innumerable bank branches, etc. Real productive investments appear to be only a minority of the many ways in which the oil rent is used. If the oil revenues dry up tomorrow (and the financial reserves for that rainy day would have dried up), these countries would fall back to an economic level which would be lower than the one they had before the oil boom. Because of the oil boom, many agricultural activities (like the growing of date-palms and animal husbandry) have been neglected or abandoned, although recently Saudi Arabia made a start with wheat production on a highly capital intensive basis. In addition, there is hardly an indigenous industrial bourgeoisie which has any political power to change the course of history. The major part of the investments are done by the state which consists of the ruling classes that still show the rent capitalist attitude mentioned above.

In many OPEC countries the traditional rent capitalist triad still exists: state-clan-rent. The state comprised by the leading clan, distributes a part of the rent among the other clans. To have a truly capitalist development the oil rent should be transformed into profit, through industrial investments. Quite apart from the attitude which this requires, there are some additional problems which hinder this transformation of rent.

The first is that much of the oil rent is being exported. The upper classes realize the major part of their profits on the international scene through investments in the West. The second problem is that the national market is so small that it cannot really sustain a dynamic and independent capitalist development. Nevertheless, the Middle Eastern OPEC countries harbour a young technocratic generation, trained and educated in the West, which is an adherent of a policy of national capital accumulation through investments in infrastructural facilities, etc. Increasingly they enter into a conflictual situation with the old, established rent-capitalist classes who realize, as mentioned, their profits on the international market and do not want the massive immigration waves, which a capitalist development process brings along. The way in which this conflict is crystallizing, is through a battle for ministerial posts in the government.

So, for two reasons, these countries still form part of the Third World, although they take up a totally separate positions, there is a very high dependency on imports (labor, capital goods, consumption



articles and know-how) and there is no national capital accumulation process because of the lack of a national market.

#### EFFECTS IN THE LABOUR IMPORTING COUNTRIES

One of the main consequences of the massive labor-import (above all used in building and service activities) is the fragmentation of the social structure together with a low productivity of the national population. Given the fact that these countries have an age-old clan structure, it should be clear that the process of nation building, in the sense of forming a national cultural identity, is rather important in starting a truly national-based development process. However, nation building is rather difficult in countries with such enormous amounts of foreign labourers. To give a few numbers: the Saudi Arabian city of Riad is inhabited by one million foreigners, Jeddah has a population in which 52 per cent are foreigners. In the whole of Saudi Arabia 30 per cent of the population is of foreign origin, in Kuwait the figure is 50 per cent. The United Arab Emirates (formed in 1971 by 7 former British protectorates) has a total population of one million inhabitants of which 73 per cent are foreigners (especially from India and Pakistan). In UAE nationals' complain about the cultural influence of Asian maid servants on the children. Sometimes there are razzias among illegal immigrants, followed by massive deportations. Also identity checks are regular in the UAE. In an attempt to reduce the number of migrant laborers there is a law which enforces immigrants to leave the country for at least 6 months before being able to change jobs. In practice, however, the effect is the opposite: companies now have to attract new laborers from outside the country instead of being able to employ already present immigrant workers.

Of the 250,000 inhabitants in Qatar 75 per cent is non-Qatari, with an even higher figure (86 per cent) for foreign participation in the economically active population. In Qatar there are more Pakistanis than Qataris one of the reasons why the government does not discuss the number of immigrants for fear of stirring feelings of national unrest.

There are a number of adverse implications of this large share of immigrants in the host country population:

- (i) In the context of nation building one should not forget to mention the growing influence of Iranian immigrants with respect to fundamentalist issues and attitudes which has its effects not only in the labor importing countries but also in the labor exporting countries because of fundamentalists views brought back by returning migrants.
- (ii) Not only the process of nation building is effected by the large number of labor migrants, but also the sex ratio is totally lopsided towards the number of males. However, this lopsidedness now is not as extreme as in the early period of the oil

- boom; in a later phase labor migrants started to take along their families and the wives gave birth in the host countries.
- (iii) In countries with 50-80 per cent foreigners, cities tend to become ethnic enclaves, while they ought to have a leading function in building up a national culture.
  - (iv) Labor migrants in many countries are denied the same services and rights as the national population, e.g. there is no juridical protection whatsoever, there is discrimination and the housing conditions in many instances are very bad. In addition, the migrant workers are exploited by the *kafils* (middlemen) who receive money from the employers as well as from the migrant laborers who pay for the 'prerogative' to be put under contract by the *kafil*. So, in spite of the sizable amount of money earned by the migrant laborers, the aforementioned negative circumstances sometimes lead to growing resentment against the host countries. In case the migrant workers are Arabs, this certainly does not further the cause of Pan-Arabian unity. There hardly exist any bilateral treaties concerning migrant workers. Egypt and Qatar have such a treaty, but this does not particularly lead to a better treatment of the workers in question.
  - (v) Another negative effect for Pan-Arabian unity is that the income differences between the Arabian oil countries on the one hand, and, the Arabian labour exporters on the other, continue to rise in spite of the fact that OPEC-development funds are channelled towards the poorer Arabian countries.
  - (vi) One particular aspect in the context of nation building is the emancipation of women. The immigration of laborers is at the same time the cause and the effect of the very reduced participation of women in the production process. Because of the traditional status of women in these countries, participation in the production process is limited, thus heightening the demand for foreign workers. But at the same time this immigration blocks the possibility for women to work outside their homes, which in the process of female emancipation is an essential element.
  - (vii) In fact, it can be generally stated that the development of local human resources is sub-optimal: schooling as well as labor mentality is primarily directed towards non-productive activities.
  - (viii) A specific economic consequence of the oil rent, quite apart from the labor immigration, is the neglect of agriculture because of the strong rural-urban migration induced by the attraction of the urban rent economy. Irrigation canals are neglected, cattle herds grow smaller, etc.; factors which in themselves contribute to the cityward migration. As mentioned before in a country like Saudi Arabia there are recent attempts to start agricultural projects although at high capital costs.

## EFFECTS IN THE LABOUR EXPORTING COUNTRIES

As compared to these effects of labour migration in the importing countries, what is its fall out from the point of view of the labour exporter? In examining this we begin with the quantitative aspects of the remittances by the migrant workers. Estimates of the World Bank indicate that in 1980 an amount of US\$ 3 billion was transferred by the migrant workers to their home countries. Other estimates mention US\$ 6 billion, but the Egyptian government calculated that for that country alone by 1980 US\$ 4 billion was estimated to have been transferred. However, the latter estimate was based on the assumption that 3 million Egyptians were working abroad and that does not seem very realistic. Fergany (1988) estimates that transfers in the Egyptian case amount to US\$ 1 billion in 1985-1986, which is about 14 per cent of the GNP and as much as the revenues from the Suez Canal together with revenues from oil and cotton exports.

In making a fair up-to-date estimate of remittances to labor-exporting countries within the Middle East one has to take account of many factors like: a downward pressure on wages in the oil countries because of the reduced royalties and the increasing competition by the import of low-wage workers from the Far-East, the general decrease of labor opportunities in the OPEC countries because there is hardly anything left to be built anymore, those remittances which do find their way to the home country through unofficial channels, etc. All in all, therefore, it would seem that the World Bank estimate for 1980 would be closer to what prevails currently.

Taking 1980 as a point of reference, the remittances to India made up 1 per cent of the Indian GNP, while in Pakistan this percentage was nearly 9 per cent and in the Philippines a bit over 3 per cent. Figures become more impressive (and also more revealing) when we look at the 'earnings' from labor export as a share of total exports. In Pakistan earnings from labor export accounted for 70 per cent of the total export value, in Bangladesh the figure was 53 per cent, and in India between 20 and 25 per cent. The amount of money which potentially could be transferred by the migrant worker is partly reduced by the payment to the *kafil* in the host country. For example it will cost a Filipino some US\$ 900 as payment to a *kafil* to be able to work in the Middle East.

In the case of South Korea, the government has an extra interest in labour migration to the Middle East. South Korean labourers are increasingly popular in the Middle East for a number of reasons: they accept a lower wage, they do not mind being put away in isolated barracks and they are sure to return to Korea once the job is done. Korean firms offer package deals to oil countries, meaning that Korean firms construct whatever is necessary, bringing their own labour. The advantage for the Korean government comes in form of increased foreign currency earnings, taxes and income through passport fees.

In general, the remittances, to the countries of origin are hardly used for productive investments; between 50-70 per cent of the remittances

are used for durable consumption goods. Evidence from Egypt shows that up to nearly 20 per cent of the savings brought back from the oil countries is kept in cash because of insufficient trust in the banking system (a not unreasonable attitude given the recent scandals involving the Islamic investments banks). Further the higher income groups, in particular, show a tendency to keep their savings outside Egypt. Another part of the savings is used to pay off debts and/or cover marriage expenses.

One of the consequences of the non-productive use of the remittances is the inflationary effect through land speculation and the import of luxury consumption articles, although in Egypt the major cause for inflation is the open door ('infitah') policy. An interesting detail is the inflationary effect on bride prices. In countries where these are a common institution (e.g. Pakistan), bride prices have increased manyfold, creating problems especially for the poorer families because they, least of all economic classes, participate in labour emigration to the oil countries.

Apart from the inflationary effect, the import of luxury consumption articles has two side effects, which reinforce this import. The import of luxury food articles means increased competition for the peasant who produces for the national market, so national food production tends to decline. The import of luxury industrial goods has the same sort of effect; the efforts of the national bourgeoisie to set up industries are frustrated by foreign imports. So, here we have one of the vicious circles which are characteristic of Third World countries: a low level of productive investments, high imports to satisfy the demand of the upper-middle and upper classes, competition for the national industrial bourgeoisie leading to relatively high speculative investments, etc.

The on-the-job training effect which the returning labourers could put to productive use in their home countries is very limited; this quite apart from the reduced productive use of the remittances. Many were hired to do unschooled work and did not acquire special skills at all. Others were employed in the bureaucratic apparatus and likewise did not learn anything new; in fact their previous knowledge was exactly the reason that there was a demand for their presence in the oil countries.

There is a difference between the countries of origin concerning the level of education of their labour export. Egyptians can be found in all economic branches in the oil countries, North-Yemenites however are above all employed in the non-skilled sectors while Jordanians usually occupy posts in the higher economic echelons. So instead of profiting from newly acquired skills there is, on the contrary, a brain drain from the labour exporting countries to the oil countries. For example, in Jordan two-thirds of the technical engineers are working in the oil countries.

There generally is a selective emigration to the oil countries. Within every branch it is the most dynamic and relatively best trained people who migrate. This has consequences for the structure of the internal labour market in the countries of origin. In Egypt, for example, this selective emigration put an upward pressure on rural wages (quite paradoxical in a country as overpopulated as Egypt) which initiated a process of mechanization. This process is sometimes known as the 'autoreform' of the agricultural sector. Anyway, the Egyptian government is very pessimistic about the chances for the returning migrants to find a job again in the agricultural sector. It would seem however that in the Egyptian case extreme pessimism is unwarranted: in the first place because many returning migrants were not planning to find a job again in the agricultural sector; in the second, because the official estimate of the number of Egyptians working in the oil countries (and potential remigrants) is much too high.

What is worrying is the increasing growth of the cities in the Egyptian delta, because of the autoreform in the agricultural sector and the fact that returning migrants prefer an urban environment to live in. A city like Cairo, wedged in between the Muqatam mountain chain, the desert and the agricultural fields of the delta can only grow inward. This implosion will certainly worsen the already marginal housing conditions of many people.

A phenomenon related to the changing of the internal labour market is the so-called replacement migration. In Jordan, where 28 per cent of the economically active population is working in the oil countries, Egyptians and Pakistanis are offered lower skilled jobs. North Yemen for example, employs Pakistanis for unskilled labour. Consequently, wages for unskilled labour in that country have risen to the same level as in Saudi Arabia. This means a heavy burden for North Yemen. Replacement migration also depends on the degree of occupational mobility which for example in Egypt is much lower than in Jordan. In addition one can observe in Egypt the same phenomenon as in the labour importing oil countries i.e. the penetration of South Korean firms in the building industry and Philippine domestic servants, thereby inhibiting mobility on the national market.

In the case of the host countries we mentioned the significance of a fragmented social structure as one of the consequences of the labour immigration. In the countries of origin there is a reverse effect: the growing importance of the joint family. The reasons are the following. In order to be able to become a migrant worker one usually first has to borrow money, e.g. to pay the *kafil* his share. The joint family provides a helping hand to raise the necessary funds thus binding the members closer together although this varies from country to country. On return, the remittances usually are invested in a small business enterprise in which the members of the joint family participate as co-owners or employees. A third factor is that in the situation of absence

of the male head of a nuclear family there is a male of the joint family who takes charge of important decisions within that nuclear family.

This latter point leads us to the effect of male labour emigration for the emancipation of women. As indicated, the males of the joint family replace the male head of household during his absence thus reducing the possibility of the women to take full charge of all decisions. Yet one can assume that a larger female participation in the decision making process will exist. Larger degrees of freedom will be next to zero because of the extended social control by the joint family and the small village communities. In India and Pakistan male absence can accelerate existing tensions between women and her in-laws. This sometimes leads to psychic disturbances of the woman involved, known in Pakistan as 'Dubai Syndrome'.

Lastly, there is the question of the effect of labour migration for family planning programmes. It is not difficult to imagine that the motivation for women to consistently implement anticonception measures (like pills) is rather limited if the husband is away from home for large periods of time.

Summarizing the effects of international labour migration the major point to notice is that there is little congruence in that respect between the individual and the nation. Labour migration is an individual solution to overcome monetary problems and this will in general be successful. The effects, however, on a national scale for the host countries as well as for the countries of origin show a number of negative tendencies, many of which can be related to the nature of rent capitalism, like for example the problems of nation building in the host countries and the effect of inflation the labour exporting countries.

A related issue is the expected number of migrants, induced by the dramatic fall in the oil price since late 1985 to about US\$ 15 per barrel. Yet, Birks et al. (1986) do not expect a similar dramatic outflow of foreign workers. There has been a general decline in the number of new work permits, but it seems that data in Kuwait indicate that the number of renewed work permits is increasing. There are various reasons for this. In the first place it is obvious that employers tend to renew work permits because it is becoming more difficult to import newly recruited laborers. Secondly, the number of operational staff needed to service the new industries and infrastructure there still implies employing foreign labor. And thirdly, it seems that there is a general expansion in the demand for domestic servants. Anyway, the total effect of the lower oil revenues will be translated in a slowing down of newly recruited labor, but for the time being it does not seem that there will be dramatic numbers of returning migrants. This does not take away from the fact that the reduced possibility for many to migrate to the oil states to solve their financial problems, will add to the continuing economic crisis in the non-oil producing countries in the Middle East and in Southeast Asia.

## REFERENCES

- F. Arnold and N. Shah, 'Asian Labor Migration to the Middle East', *International Migration Review* 17 (2) 1984, pp.294-318.
- G. Beauge, 'Le Role de l'Etat dans les Migrations de Travailleurs et la 'Diversification' Economique des Pays de la Peninsule Arabe', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 597-620.
- J. Birk, I. Seccombe and C. Sinclair, 'Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf: The Impact of Declining Oil Revenues', *International Migration Review* 20 (4) 1986, pp.799-814.
- N. Fergany, 'Migrations Inter-Arabs et Developpement', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 583-596.
- , *Saïan Waraa El Rizq*, Centre of Arab Unity, Beirut, 1988.
- A. Findlay, *Remittances, Regional Disparities and Population Change: The Results of Two Household Surveys in Marka and Surcilah, Jordan*. Paper for the Anglo-Dutch symposium on 'Regional Disparities and Migration in the Third World. Free University, Amsterdam, 1985.
- A. Ged, 'Migrations et Transformations Economiques et Sociales en Egypte', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 493-506.
- F. Halliday, 'Migrations de Main-d'Oeuvre dans le Monde Arabe 1' Envers du Nouvel Ordre Economique', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 665-679.
- D. Hosni and I. Sirageldin, 'La Dynamique de la Main-d'Oeuvre a Koweït: Un Dilemma pour un Pays Exportateur de Petrole', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 621-635.
- L. Huan-Ming Ling, 'East Asian Migrations to Middle East: Causes, Consequences and Considerations', *International Migration Review* 1984, pp. 19-36.
- R. Lawless and I. Seccombe, 'Travailleurs Migrants et Debuts de l'Industrie Petroliere dans le Golfe Arabe, 1930-1950', *Sommaire* 112, 1986, pp.22-43.
- J. Lewis, *International Labor Migration and Uneven Regional Development in Labor Exporting Countries*. Paper for the Anglo-Dutch workshop (see Findlay), 1985.
- E. Longuenesse, 'Effects Sociaux des Migrations Interarabes avant propos-', *Sommaire* 112, 1986, pp. 5-8.
- , 'Migrations et Societe dans les Pays du Golfe', *Sommaire* 112, 1986, pp. 8-22.
- A. Roussillon, 'Migrations de Main-d'Oeuvre et Unite Arabe: Les Enjeux Unitaires de Modele Irakien', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 637-664.
- I. Seccombe, 'International Labor Migrations in the Middle East: A Review of Literature and Research', *International Migration Review* 19 (2) 1985, pp. 335-352.
- , *Emigration for Employment and Regional Disparity: Evidence from the Al-Kura District of N-W Jordan*. Paper for the Anglo-Dutch workshop (see Findlay), 1985.
- T. Singady, 'Migrations et Capitalisation de la Campagne en Egypte: La Reconversion de la Famille Paysanne', *Revue Tiers Monde* 26 (103) 1985, pp. 523-532.

*Import Substitution and the Structure of  
the Iranian Economy 1962-1977*

The strategy of import-substitution industrialisation (henceforth ISI) was one adopted by several newly independent countries in the postwar period. International disparities in income and degree of technological advancement between developed and underdeveloped countries, as well as the internal characteristics of the underdeveloped countries themselves, prompted an orientation to 'economic nationalism'.<sup>1</sup> The typical initiatives of the state in many such countries included not only stabilization of political power but also unification of the national market and structural transformation of the economy. To this end, greater or lesser reliance on state-directed or planned industrialisation was also an important feature of the overall strategy.

The experience of Iran, a middle-income country with modest population density and significant fluctuations in export earnings, provides an interesting example of the impact of the ISI strategy under these circumstances. The Iranian economy shared many of the general features of underdeveloped economies, in particular a marked dualism between sectors as well as major regional and income disparities. The Iranian development strategy also shared some general characteristics with other newly-industrialising countries such as India and Brazil, especially in terms of efforts made to expand the domestic market, attempts (albeit largely unsuccessful) to absorb the underemployed rural labour force, and the mobilization of domestic resources for investment in the manufacturing sector.

However, the Iranian economy differed in some crucial respects from the typical developing country with low per capita income, high population density and a binding foreign exchange constraint. The presence of large natural resources of energy allowed for the profitable export of petroleum products, which not only relieved the foreign exchange constraint but provided a dominant source of domestic savings. Thus, the major external problem which the Iranian economy faced at the time of the formulation of the ISI strategy in the early 1960s, was

---

\*Teaches Economics at Tehran University.



not an acute adverse balance of trade, but rather an adverse balance of non-oil trade. In 1962, Iran's overall trade deficit was only \$5 million, while its non-oil trade deficit was estimated at \$438 million.<sup>2</sup>

This in turn means that the major impulse behind the ISI strategy may be different in such an economy. Elsewhere, particularly in lower-income countries with low and unstable export earnings, foreign exchange constraints may be the main impulse for adopting ISI.<sup>3</sup> In Iran, by contrast, the chief purposes were income expansion and diversification of productive activities, to reduce the dependence on natural resource extraction as the chief source of income.

It is important to realize that not all resource-rich developing countries faced similar conditions to those of Iran in the 1950s and early 1960s. Within the group of oil-exporting countries, it is possible to distinguish two broad categories. The first group includes countries with an insufficient home market (because of low production) which do not find an ISI strategy advantageous such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. The second group comprises countries like Iran, Mexico and Algeria, which seem to have followed an intermediate industrialisation strategy, with initial emphasis on import substitution of consumer durables along with export promotion in the oil sector and its derivative industries.

The ISI strategy was adopted in Iran from the Third Five Year Plan (1962-1967) onwards, following upon macro stabilization policies in the early 1960s. The objectives of ISI as pursued by Iranian policy makers were to vitalize exports, to achieve more favourable terms of trade, to lower the rate of increase in imports and to substitute domestic production for a wide variety of imports even with less efficiency and higher per unit costs if necessary. What the policy makers had in mind was based on a 'trial and error' model of industrialisation<sup>4</sup> and subsequently a transition to an export-promoting era in the longer run. The short period objectives of the planners were changes in the structure of the economy in favour of more modern industries. The increase in oil incomes, the availability of mineral resources, cheap manpower in the form of surplus labour drawn from the rural sector, potentialities for domestic market growth, and last but not least, the political ambitions of the ruling groups, were all listed as major impulses for pursuing a strategy of ISI.

The specific process of Iranian industrialisation may be divided into several stages. The period prior to the 1960s was marked by major allocations of public investment for building infrastructure. In the early 1960s the process of import substitution in durable consumer goods started, leading to rapid urbanisation and market expansion. The period of the post-oil boom (1973-77) was marked by a gradual shift from import substitution to import liberalisation.

In this paper we will examine how far the strategy of ISI was successful in changing the structure of the Iranian economy, in terms of altering sectoral shares and the degree of inter-sectoral integration.<sup>5</sup> In

terms of the structure of the economy, the following trends are immediately discernible: In real terms, the share of agriculture in the GNP fell from 21.6% to 9.2% over the three Five Year Plans (1962-77). There was no change in the share of the non-oil industrial sector, while the share of the oil sector in GNP increased from 12.3% to 34.7%. In this period, the share of consumer goods imports to the total imports of Iran fell from 24.1% to 18.6% while that of capital goods increased from 20.3% to 27.2%. There was no change in the share of intermediate goods imports.

These tendencies are considered in more detail in the following section. At this stage it is important to note that they were part of an overall process which has tended to be repeated in a number of developing countries undertaking ISI. As the industrialization based upon ISI proceeded, the new industrial organisation tended to rely on capital intensive technologies and the import of components for assembling industries. The heavy reliance on modern technologies remained alien to the prior domestically-oriented economy, which remained dominated by traditional and largely low productivity methods of production. Thus, the linkages between traditional input suppliers and the enclave modern capital intensive industries, rather than increasing in the process of industrialization, kept on diminishing.<sup>6</sup>

#### GENERAL FEATURES OF IMPORT SUBSTITUTION INDUSTRIALIZATION IN IRAN

The manufactured sector exhibited a rapid growth over time, with real growth of 10 per cent per annum in 1959-63, 13.2% in 1963-72 and 15.4% in 1973-77.<sup>7</sup> During 1959-77, the manufacturing sector's income elasticity was highest in relation to the growth of both total GDP and non-oil GDP. The 1960s ISI thus created an environment necessary to stimulate an amount of investment needed to make up the ground lost over the years in the past because of the previous import openness which had meant that most manufactured goods requirements were met through imports rather than domestic production. The adoption of the ISI strategy, altogether with the increase in income from oil and the country's political stability, produced high profit expectations, and thus in turn high rates of growth of investment and output in the manufacturing sector. In fact, this sector in Iran grew at a rate twice as fast as the average growth of the manufacturing sector in other developing countries over that period. The result was an average annual growth of gross domestic fixed capital formation at 16 per cent and of fixed investment in plant and machinery of over 20 per cent during the Third and Fourth Five Year Plans. However, with the rapid industrialisation, the lack of integration between sectors was further enhanced. The modern manufacturing sector developed with minimum linkage affects with the rest of the national economy.

In the period 1962-77, the composition of the labour force, the material production structure and imports changed drastically.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, the import of manufactured goods as a percentage of domestic availability fell from 45.5 per cent to 29.5 per cent. However, the initial success of import substitution in the 1960s diminished thereafter in the 1970s, particularly after the oil boom of 1973-74 which heralded some liberalisation of imports.

During the Third and Fourth Plans (1962-72) when import substitution was the dominant government strategy, the composition of imports changed in favour of investment goods for import substituting industries. This reflected the following trends:

- (a) The share of consumption goods in total imports fell from 30.2 per cent in 1959 to 12.9 per cent in 1972.
- (b) There was no change in the share of intermediate imports in the 1960s and 1970s, but the composition of imported intermediate goods changed. Before 1964, 'social overheads' were the main item of imported intermediates, while after the Third Plan this changed in favour of inputs for 'direct productive activities'.
- (c) The share of capital goods also increased by 5 per cent in the first stage of industrialisation. It had the highest growth rate in this period, as compared to consumer and intermediate goods imports.
- (d) The rate of growth of consumer goods imports showed a negative trend prior to 1973. If we sub-divide this period into 1959-63 and 1963-73, we find that in the initial period imports decreased not because of any import substitution policy but due to import saving. During 1963-73, the fall in the import ration of consumer goods was due to the protectionist policy of the government towards consumer goods industries, while total imports in this period increased at the high rate of 23.6 per cent per year.

Thus, the composition of imports shifted rather markedly over 1959-77, as is also evident from Table 1. Overall, the country's import pattern over time suggests that the government policy of consumer goods import substitution through protection was being implemented on a large scale. The large increase in the imports of capital and intermediate goods reflected the positive response of the private sector to official inducements to invest in consumer goods production. Similarly, the large increase in the net imports of services was a reflection of the need to import technical skills required to set up and operate the new industries.

The main characteristics of Iranian industrialisation were as follows:

#### (A) Rapid Growth

According to World Bank data, Iran had the highest rate of growth of GNP (7.9 per cent per annum) among industrialized and newly industrializing countries in the period 1960-78.<sup>9</sup> The growth of the manufacturing sector was characterised by a rapid and wide ranging import substitution across consumer goods. In this period, manufacturing

output increased by six times and employment in the manufacturing sector nearly doubled, in spite of the fact that most of the major public investments were made in capital-intensive industries. Growing concentration was evidenced by the fact that the share of large units increased from 55 per cent of manufacturing value added to 67 per cent between 1969 and 1972.<sup>10</sup> Total investment increased at 21 per cent per annum in 1963-77 as compared to 0.8 per cent during 1959-63. While private investment increased in absolute terms, the ratio of private investment to government expenditure declined.<sup>11</sup> As pointed out earlier, employment grew but at a relatively slow pace compared to output and investment due to the rapid growth of capital intensive industries in Iran, and the relatively low protection given to small labour intensive units.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1  
Pattern of Imports in Iran—1959-1977 (billion rials)

	1959	1963	1972	1973	1977	Growth Rate		
						1959-1963	1963-1972	1973-1977
Total Import	(50.8)	(39.7)	(266.7)	(354.7)	(1,488.4)	-6.0	23.6	43.1
Intermediate	49.2	55.5	62.1	60.8	54.2	3.1	1.3	1.3
Goods Imported/Total	(25)	(22)	(165.6)	(215.6)	(808.7)			
Capital Goods Imported/Total	20.6	20.3	25.0	24.2	27.2	-0.4	2.3	-3.0
	(10.45)	(8)	(66.6)	(85.8)	(404.8)			
Consumer Goods Imported/Total	30.2	24.1	12.9	14.9	18.6	-5.5	-6.7	5.7
	(15.3)	(9.6)	(34.4)	(52.8)	(27.8)			
Import at (1959) Constant price	50.8	38.9	195.6	216.8	600.9	-6.5	-19.7	29.0
Import/ GNP (at constant price)	18.0	11.0	21.7	19.4	27.8	-11.6	7.8	9.4

Notes: (1) The figures in (bracket) are the absolute figures.

(2) Real Imports are current prices imports deflated with the Iranian wholesale price index.

Source: Calculated from data in Bank of Markazi Iran, *Annual Report and Balance Sheet*, *op. cit.*, various issues (1955-1979).

Import substitution in Iran occurred at all stages of manufacturing. It not only included final consumer goods, but also intermediate and capital goods. Domestic production rose from 59.9 per cent to 73.9 per cent of overall market availability. Consumer durables industries, including electricals and transport vehicles, were among the main contributors to the import substitution in Iran, followed by intermediate goods such as paper and printing. There has been limited expansion in the manufacture of intermediates like metal products and non-metallic minerals, although domestic production of the latter goods managed to increase slightly.

Table 2  
Distribution of the Growth of Manufacturing Output between Import  
Substitution and Demand Expansion (1960-1972)

	Expansion 1960-69			Expansion of 1960-72	
	Domestic Demand(%)	Export %	I.S. (%)	Total Demand (%)	I.S. (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6
Consumer Non-Durables				75.0	25.0
Food and Beverages	84.0	0.9	15.1	78.7	21.3
Tobacco	99.7	-0.5	0.7	-	-
Textiles	74.7	12.7	12.6	79.0	21.0
Apparel	84.7	0.8	14.5	94.1	5.9
Wood & Furniture	100.6	1.3	-1.6	48.1	51.9
Leather	58.3	42.8	-1.1	-	-
Intermediate	-	-	-	36.2	63.7
Paper	53.9	-	46.0		
Printing	27.5	-	72.5	37.0	63.0
Rubber	21.1	0.2	78.7	16.0	84.0
Chemicals	39.1	1.1	59.9	26.0	74.0
Metals	75.1	-	25.0	26.6	72.4
Non-metallic minerals	78.3	0.4	21.3	75.0	25.0
Consumer Durable and Capital	-	-	-	27.3	72.7
Machinery	8.8	-	92.2	7.1	92.9
Electrical Equipment	10.4	-	90.0	10.5	89.5
Transport	49.1	-	50.9	46.4	53.6
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	44.4	55.0
Total	-	-	-	45.4	54.6

Source: Output data from Ministry of Economy, *Iranian Industrial Statistics for 1970-71* (Tehran: Ministry of Economy), pp. 53-90 and 1972-73, pp. 52-71. Import data from United Nations, *International Trade Statistics*, 1960, p. 291; Ministry of Economy, *Input-Output of Iranian Import and Export (1962-1970)* (Tehran: Ministry of Economy, 1972), pp. 8-31.

By applying the Chenery methodology<sup>13</sup> to divide the growth of industrial output into import substitution and demand expansion components, we find that the rapid growth of modern Iranian industries during 1960-72 was mainly based upon import substitution. The results are presented in Table 2. On the other hand, the growth of consumer non-durable industries (typically in the traditional sector) was mainly due to demand expansion.

#### (B) Exclusive reliance of industrialization on the oil sector:

During 1963-72, foreign exchange receipts from oil and gas accounted for 76 per cent of the country's total export earnings, and the average annual rate of growth of oil and gas revenues during the Third and Fourth Plans amounted to 14.5 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. The increase of oil revenues (at a rate of around 18 per cent per annum) during 1963-70 helped to bring the level of real national savings to more than 20 per cent of GNP. In 1976, oil revenues contributed 97.5 per

cent of commodity exports and 34.9 per cent of GNP.<sup>14</sup> The contribution of oil revenues to capital formation increased from 60 per cent to 75 per cent over 1959-77.<sup>15</sup>

Oil revenues played the role of the Keynesian foreign trade multiplier in the economy. They generated income and expenditure which ultimately caused some expansion in supply in other sectors. They also contributed more directly to supply increases through the state's development budget. In the 1950s, less than half of the oil receipts went to the development budget. By the 1960s and early 1970s, this ratio had increased to more than three-quarters. This shift in allocation of oil revenue in favour of plan expenditure indicates that the government relied more on the fiscal effect of the oil sector and its generation of resources than on its direct linkage effects.

### (C) Weak direct linkages of modern industries

An important feature of Iranian industrialisation has been its heavy reliance on imported inputs, and the consequent lack of integration and interdependence within the domestic manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector remained an enclave of assembling imported parts with marginal backward and forward linkages and increasing dependence on the import of foreign technology, skilled manpower and capital goods. By 1970, consumer goods output increased to 68 per cent of manufacturing output, compared to 62 per cent in 1962. Exports fell from 4.7 per cent of manufacturing output in 1962 to only 2.3 per cent in 1970. Imports accounted for a continuously higher proportion of manufacturing inputs, a tendency which greatly accelerated after the 1973 oil boom. The manufacturing sector's sales to other sectors fell from 31 per cent to 19 per cent during 1962-70. The details of such processes are given in Table 3.

It is important to distinguish between backward and forward linkages. For some industries, such as those producing final consumer goods, backward linkages may assume predominance, while in the case of chemicals, metals and other intermediate goods, both backward and forward linkages may be high. In the case of raw material and energy, demand influences (i.e. forward linkages) are dominant.

The constraints on the emergence of backward linkages in the manufacturing sector in Iran were related to the very process of industrialization. Firstly, the ISI process was heavily oriented towards the production of consumer goods. Infant industries were heavily protected by the state, both in terms of sheltered domestic markets as well as provision of imported inputs. The lag in capital and intermediate goods production was clearly related to the lack of restrictions on the import of such goods together with the high tariffs placed on consumer goods. Secondly, there was continuous and increasing dependence on the import of foreign technology, skilled manpower and capital goods. Modernization emphasized a shift from inefficient domestic inputs to more productive 'state of the art' inputs, which was seen as requiring a shift

from traditional technology to sophisticated foreign technology. Typically the large projects used foreign labour—saving technology, which led to a less than proportionate increase in employment in relation to the massive rural-urban migration.

Another important criticism of the ISI strategy in Iran was the neglect of the agricultural sector as a main supplier of raw materials to the processing industries. Although the inter-industry demand for agricultural goods increased from 23 per cent to 30 per cent over 1962-70, nevertheless the bulk of agricultural products were consumed without industrial processing. In 1977, the forward linkage of the agricultural sector to the oil sector, for example, was estimated to be less than 1 per cent.<sup>16</sup>

Table 3  
Structural Inter-dependence of Iranian Economy: 1962-1970  
(Figures are in 1959 prices-billion rials)

Sector	Inter-industry Demand		Consumption		Capital Formation		Export	
	Value	Per cent	Value	Per cent	Value	Per cent	Value	Per cent
1962								
Agriculture	22.70	23.10	72.30	-	-	3.20	3.20	-
Oil and Mine	8.70	12.70	4.50	6.60	-	-	55.30	80.80
Other Sectors	38.20	26.10	77.50	52.90	30.70	21.00	-	-
Manufacturing	28.40	31.30	56.60	62.40	1.40	1.60	4.20	4.70
1970								
Agriculture	52.48	29.86	117.65	66.95	-	-	5.59	3.18
Oil and Mine	42.87	70.65	16.71	27.54	-	-	1.10	1.81
Other Sectors	114.34	38.72	88.81	30.08	87.94	29.78	4.18	1.42
Manufacturing	47.91	19.07	170.76	67.97	26.87	10.70	5.67	2.26

*Note:* In the 1970 table, unlike in the 1962 table, oil and mining reflects domestic oil and mining lumped together as one single sector.

*Source:* Data for 1970: G.Pyat, *Methodology for Macro-economic Projection* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1973), Table II.2.

Data for 1962: Ministry of Economy, *Input-Output Tables for Iran* (Tehran: Ministry of Economy, 1963), p. 62.

By comparing the input-output tables for 1962 and 1970, we find that manufacture's sale to other sectors fell from 31 per cent during 1962-1970. (Table 4.11).

Similarly, there were many factors inhibiting the development of forward linkages of import substituting industries. Firstly, the newly emerged industries were producing consumer durables (such as motor vehicles and home appliances) which had very few forward linkages.<sup>17</sup> Further, the share of primary intermediate goods, which potentially produce high forward linkages, declined over time due to the neglect of agriculture.

Capital goods production in Iran suffered from deficiency of demand and lack of competitiveness. The import of machinery at the end of the Fifth Plan (1977) was estimated to be more than 90 per cent of the

domestic market. In addition, the market for domestically produced machinery was clearly limited, despite the boom in consumer durables, because of the hesitation of the private sector to utilize domestic inputs, and other technical inputs.<sup>18</sup> Deficiency of domestic inputs, easy access to imported capital goods and the interest of multinationals in investing in assembling industries, all negatively affected the development of basic industries in Iran.

Apart from inadequate inter-industry demand, domestic final demand also remained unsatisfactory due to the unequal distribution, lack of organized market planning and sectoral and geographical disparities. As far as income distribution was concerned, the state's technocratic strategy of ISI was generating income inequality. In the early 1970s, nearly half of the country's population was living in near subsistence conditions. Seventy two per cent of the country's rural families had an income below subsistence level.<sup>19</sup> A study by the Bank Markazi, Iran, suggests that whereas the income gap between urban and rural sectors had fallen from 2.13 in 1959 to 1.91 in 1965 (after implementation of the land reforms), it had increased to 3.21 in 1972. This deterioration coincided with the period when the import substitution of consumer durables was getting under way on a large scale. Apparently, with the implementation of ISI, the intersectoral income gap between urban and rural areas began to widen at an alarming rate. According to another estimate, a small proportion of 10 per cent of the population accounted for more than 40 per cent of the consumption of total goods and services in the economy.<sup>20</sup> The highly skewed income distribution contributed to the decline of the market for domestic products.

The process of ISI in Iran probably favoured profits over wages within the industrial sector. The wage share in value added of Iranian industries was estimated at only 19 per cent, as against around 50 per cent in a country like India.<sup>21</sup> The experience of Iran and other ISI regimes shows that although for a limited period these countries may achieve a substantial rate of growth despite unequal distribution of wealth and income, in the longer run a substantial rate of growth of manufacturing can rarely be sustained without the parallel creation and maintenance of a more equitable income distribution.

The Iranian ISI also increasingly reflects sectoral imbalances, most notably evidenced in the manner which the services sector has come to dominate GNP. Simultaneously, the productivity of labour in the agricultural sector has actually declined.<sup>22</sup> Given the limited disposable income in agriculture and public services, the demand potential that these sectors may generate for manufacturing growth is rather limited.



## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that although the GNP and industrial output of Iran grew rapidly throughout the 1960s and 1970s, during the process of ISI, none of the major objectives of development planning, that is eradication of economic dualism and diversification of the economic structure and exports, were fulfilled.

The oil sector played a double-edged role in the industrialisation of Iran. While the income generating effect of oil was an initial impulse for the strategy of ISI in the early 1960s, the subsequent fluctuation of its price was a hindering factor in sustained growth and fulfillment of plan objectives. Oil revenues had the impact of a foreign trade multiplier, although the planning authorities relied more on the fiscal effects of the oil sector rather than its direct production and consumption effects.

Another important feature of Iranian industrialisation was its heavy dependence on imported inputs and components and the lack of domestic interlinkages within the industrial sector. There are numerous factors which put constraints on sectoral integration. On the demand side, the main factor was the reliance of Iranian ISI on the domestic production (assembly) of durable consumer goods which did not use domestic resources such as raw materials and unskilled labour. The shift from traditional techniques to modern capital-intensive techniques brought about two major changes in the economy. Firstly, there was massive rural-urban migration of labour which could not be absorbed in the capital-intensive manufacturing sector. Thus, disguised unemployment in the rural areas turned into unemployed or casual construction and service labour in the urban areas. Secondly, there was bankruptcy within the traditional sector (agricultural and artisan activities) due to their lack of protection and little integration with the modern sector.

This dualistic pattern of development changed terms of trade as well as the distribution of income against both the traditional sector and urban wage workers. The 'growth-oriented' industrialisation process favoured the modern sector at the cost of the traditional sector and at the same time, profits over wages. In the course of the Shah's 'journey to the most advanced world', the country was left with half of the population near subsistence level and about three-quarters of the rural population below the poverty line. The political outcome of this dualism was the massive unrest for the restoration of traditional values and social justice in the late 1970s, culminating in the overthrow of the regime.

The future course of action depends on, among other things, the political desire for self-reliance and comprehensive development. It has become clear that the injection of oil money will not by itself bring about structural changes. Self-sustained growth is an evolutionary process, and for that reason the life-span of oil revenues must be extended to ensure a continual flow of foreign exchange. The question

still remains of what should be the policy package for the future course of reconstruction. The planning authorities have to keep in mind the requirements of urgent postwar anti-stagflation measures as well as long term development objectives.

The medium term strategy for the Iranian economy may still maintain its intermediate character because of the possibility of export-oriented mineral based industrialisation and on the other hand the desirability of saving foreign exchange which the war-torn economy needs urgently. Given the decline and instability of world oil prices, and consequently the decline in the import capacity of the economy, the government may rely more on foreign exchange saving policy packages. With the post-revolution expansion of the domestic market due to the rapid increase in population and the decline in the economic isolation of the rural population, there are brighter prospects for the integration and expansion of the domestic market for domestic products.

### Appendix I 3. Sectoral Distribution of Population (million persons)

	1966	%	1976	%
Agricultural Sector	12.2	47.1	11.46	34.3
Industrial Sector	6.9	26.6	11.52	34.5
Tertiary Sector	6.8	26.3	10.40	31.20
Total	25.9	100.0	33.38	100.0

Source: Iran Centre of Statistics, *General Census of Population and Housing* (Tehran: C.S. Press, 1976), p. 14.

### Appendix II Sectoral Distribution of GNP, at Constant Prices (million rials)

Sector	1962-63		1967-68		1972-73		1977-78	
	Amount	% in GNP	Amount	% in GNP	Amount	% in GNP	Amount	% in GNP
Agriculture	88.8	27.4	111.1	21.6	271.0	10.3	339.0	9.2
-Non-oil Industry	57.8	17.8	106.3	20.7	338.0	12.6	64.3	18.5
-Services	119.8	40.0	187.0	36.4	629.4	23.9	1281.3	34.6
-Oil	40.0	12.3	92.4	18.0	1333.3	50.6	1284.9	34.7
-GNP at Market prices	324.2	-	513.8	-	2635.7	-	3702.4	-

Source: Katoozian, H., *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London: Mcmillan, '81) p. 257.

## NOTES

1. See Raul Prebisch, 'Commercial Policy in Underdeveloped Countries', *American Economic Review*, May 1959, pp 251-271.
2. Commercial Statistics, Ministry of Economy, Iran, 1966, p.32.
3. See A.O.Hirschman, 'The Political Economy of Import Substitution Industrialization In Latin America', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol 132 No. 1, February 1968, pp 1-12.
4. The 'trial and error' method was introduced by Jan Tinbergen in his article 'Development Planning' (New York, McGraw Hill, 1967).
5. There are various meanings attached to the term structural change. It may be defined as change in population growth, productivity of various sectors and in demand for different goods. Here, we will emphasize changes in the structure of inputs, production and inter-industry integration.
6. For a detailed discussion of the linkage concept, see A.O. Hirschman, *The Strategy of Economic Development*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968.
7. Bank Markazi, Iran, Annual Reports and Balance Sheets, various issues.
8. See Appendices I and II.
9. E.Charle, *Macro Economics of Developing Countries*, New Delhi, Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., 1983, p 125.
10. Ministry of Economy, *Statistics on Large Industrial Establishments of Iran*, 1969, p vii; 1971-72, pp Kh-d.
11. Bank Markazi, Annual Reports, various issues.
12. See Walter Elkan, *Iran's Human Resources*, London, Focus Research, 1974.
13. According to H.B.Chenery, growth in domestic output depends on the growth of final demand (D), intermediate demand (W), and export demand(E), assuming that a constant proportion of total supply is imported ( $U_1$ ). If there is a change in ratio of domestic production (X) to total supply (Z) because of import substitution, this will be reflected in  $(U_2 - U_1) Z_2$ . Therefore, we get the sources of growth by applying the following formula:  

$$X = U_1 (D + W) + U_1 E + (U_2 - U_1) Z_2$$

In Table 2, demand expansion covers final, intermediate and export demand. Due to inadequacy of reliable data, it is not possible to distinguish the composition as between those three categories, but Table 3 clarifies that in 1972 the shares of intermediate, final and export demand of manufacturing sector were 19, 68 and 2.3% respectively.  
For details, see H.B.Chenery, 'Pattern of Industrial Growth', *American Economic Review*, September 1960, pp 624-54.
14. R.Looney, *Economic Origin of the Iranian Revolution*, New York, Praeger, 1982, p 91.
15. Bank Markazi, Iran, *National Income of Iran*, 1959-76, Teheran 1979.
16. A.Shahshahani, *An Economic Model for Iran*, Teheran Institute for Development and Economic Research, 1978, p 49 (in Persian).
17. R.Wilson, *Trade and Investment in the Middle East*, London, Macmillan, 1977, p. 67.
18. The elasticity of demand for machinery in Iran was estimated to be 1.4 in 1968, but the share of the domestic market for machinery fell from 9.5% to 7.9% during 1960-69.  
For details see Kunio Miyamoto, *UN Industrial Programming Data*, Teheran, UN, 1970; and Ministry of Economy, Annual Surveys, Teheran, Bureau of Statistics, 1970, p. 72.
19. R.L.Chawla, 'Economic Development of Iran', *India Quarterly*, April-July 1979, p, 168.
20. Fred Halliday, 'The Coalition against the Shah', *New Statesman*, London, Jan 5, 1979, p. 2.
21. Iranian estimates made in 1966. See United Nations, *The Growth of World Industry: General Industrial Statistics*, Vol I, New York, 1967, pp 221-2.
22. See World Bank, World Bank Tables, Washington DC 1971-75 and ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, Geneva 1974.

## *Structural Characteristics of the Mexican Economy (1942-82)*

The aim of this paper is a limited one - to delineate the structural<sup>1</sup> characteristics of the Mexican economy, from the point of view of those that are likely to affect its future growth and development. It is not the aim of this paper to examine in detail the evolution of the Mexican economy between 1940 and 1982. It is a task which has been undertaken by several scholars (Cockcroft 1983, Looney 1985, Fitzgerald 1985, Reynolds 1970 to name just a few) and to avoid repetition I shall draw upon their contributions.

It might be worthwhile to state more explicitly why I find it necessary to study the structural characteristics of the Mexican economy. This is in the nature of a prelude to a study of the restructuring which the Mexican economy has undergone in the period 1983-88 (the de la Madrid presidential term) as a consequence of having faced the debt crisis of 1982.

The de la Madrid government had two short term and one long term goal which it set for itself at the beginning of the presidential term. The short term goals were, first, a reduction in the inflation rate, and second, adjustment of the BOP. The long term goal was a shift in the relative price structure such as to promote export-led growth and move towards a more market oriented economy. Ros (1987) defines the goal more sharply as 'a radical shift in the price of tradables relative to non-tradables, in order to stimulate non-oil exports'. This strategy for growth as opposed to one of ISI, which is what Mexico had been following until then, would certainly mean a reordering of intra-sectoral priorities if not intersectoral ones.

A detailed look at how this change in relative price was sought to be brought about, and how successful the attempt was, would be out of place here. Suffice to say that to be able to understand the trajectory which the economy took in an effort to restructure, one must understand how the economy came to obtain the structure that it had at the beginning of the period. One must have an understanding of the nature

\* Research student, Centre for Economic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

of the growth process and what is it that constrains growth in the economy. This is essential to the study of restructuring, because successful restructuring would have to tackle existing constraints and overcome them. But to understand how the economy resolves these constraints one will have to identify and understand them in the first place.

Perhaps a word or two about the period chosen would not be out of place. Any chronological demarcation in the evolution of an economy and society is bound to have a degree of arbitrariness. It could as well have been argued that for a richer and more correct understanding of the structural constraints on the growth of the Mexican economy, one should possibly look at the entire post-independence period. The position would doubtless be correct. The only answer that I have to this criticism is that the longer the period that one is dealing with, the more difficult it becomes to try and telescope it within the bounds of an introductory piece, as this is meant to be.

Apart from reasons of expediency, there is a more fundamental one for having chosen this time period. It was in the presidency of Cardenas (1934-39), that the political and social elements of the modern Mexican state were put together. The precursor of the present day PRI - the PRM - was formed during the Cardenas Presidency.<sup>2</sup> As Cockcroft (1983) argues 'Cardenas seized . . . to further consolidate a corporatist model of social and political organization.' Cardenas also tried to implement some of the rhetoric of the Mexican Revolution-land reforms, nationalization of the petroleum industry - measures which were to have an incalculable significance for the development of the economy. Thus by 1940 most of the elements of the modern Mexican state, as we know it today, were in place. It is this fact which gives the period a certain degree of continuity and coherence.

By concentrating on the structural constraints operating on Mexico's growth process, I am in no way attempting to deny the remarkable growth which the Mexican economy has seen over the period. A look at the decadal growth rates of real GDP would substantiate how impressive these have been.

Average rates of growth	
1930-40	2.9% p.a.
1940-50	6.9% p.a.
1950-60	5.6% p.a.
1960-70	7.0% p.a.
1970-80	5.0% p.a.

Source: Looney (1985)

Indeed, this paper is an effort to understand the evolution of the economy which led to, on the one hand, such sustained high rates of growth, and on the other, increasing structural imbalances. Though the

reasons offered may be different, the fact that structural imbalances exist, is widely accepted in the literature (Hardy 1982; Fitzgerald 1985; Looney 1985).

These high rates of growth have also meant structural changes in the economy. The share of agriculture in the GDP has come down from 21 per cent in 1940 to 9 per cent in 1980 and that of manufacturing has gone up from 24 to 39 per cent over the same period. Interestingly enough, the contribution of services has barely changed - going down from 55 to 53 per cent.<sup>3</sup> For employment, the story is somewhat different - over the same period, agriculture's share in employment has fallen from 65 to 32 per cent and that of manufacturing and services has risen from 16 to 26 per cent and 19 to 42 per cent respectively.

This in some sense reflects the paradox about Mexico's development - whereas the economy has certainly shown impressive growth rates, the effects of these rates of growth on sectoral outputs and employment have been asymmetrical. In output terms the entire change in shares has gone in favour of manufacturing, whereas in employment terms, it has been the service sector which has borne the brunt of absorbing Mexico's fast increasing labour force.

The economy's resource mobilization effort, while not being as impressive as the NIC's of East Asia, was by no means meagre. Capital formation, in 1960, was already at a respectable 20 per cent and by 1978 had gone up to a commendable 28 per cent. Until the seventies, inflation was kept in check and the economy saw remarkable price stability.

Inflation and GDP growth rates ( percentages)

	1951/60	1961/70	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Price Index	7.7	3.5	16.7	22.2	32.2	17.5	20.0	30.0
Real GDP	6.1	7.0	4.1	1.7	6.6	6.6	7.5	7.5

Source: Banco Nacional, de Mexico, quoted in Hardy (1982)

To reiterate then, it is not that growth has not occurred, but that the consequences of that growth have been worrisome. These statistics conceal more than they reveal, and it is in what they conceal that I am interested, for reasons which have already been spelt out above.

Some of the aspects of Mexico's development process which will influence its future pattern of growth are listed below:

- (a) Growth has meant worsening of the income distribution, which was to start with highly unequal, therefore leading to a restriction of the size of the home market.
- (b) Partly because of, what has been euphemistically called, 'benign neglect' (Meissner 1987) and partly due to the nature of the agricultural policy itself, agriculture has suffered. The benefits of government investment in agriculture have been appropriated by

the TNC's and the latifundistas.<sup>4</sup> A peculiar pricing policy has meant that these two groups have produced non-food crops for the export market. The bulk of the food crops are cultivated in the rainfed regions, where the peasant has neither the incentive nor the wherewithal to use improved technology. Mexico consequently has become a net importer of foodgrains.

- (c) ISI starting at the consumer goods end has meant an underdeveloped capital goods sector. Manufacturing has become increasingly capital and import intensive, therefore adding to Balance of Payment pressures.
- (d) If Mexico has been able to maintain high rates of growth despite the above problems it is because it chose to run a continual balance of trade deficit. But with the economy increasingly unable to sustain this deficit, Mexico turned to international borrowing and once international real interest rates started moving up the BOP collapsed and Mexico had no other option but accepting the IMF way of a prolonged recession.

#### INCOME DISTRIBUTION, POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Distribution of income by deciles ( percentages)

Deciles	1950	1958	1963	1968	1970	1975	1977
1	2.43	2.32	1.69	1.21	1.42	1.35	1.08
2	3.17	3.21	1.97	2.21	2.34	1.39	2.21
3	3.18	4.06	3.42	3.04	3.49	2.50	3.23
4	4.29	4.98	3.42	4.22	4.54	3.53	4.42
5	4.93	6.02	5.14	5.07	5.46	4.96	5.73
6	5.96	7.49	6.08	6.46	8.24	6.57	7.15
7	7.04	8.29	7.85	8.28	8.24	8.52	9.11
8	9.63	10.73	12.38	11.39	10.44	11.51	11.98
9	13.89	17.20	16.45	16.06	16.61	16.84	17.09
10a	10.38	10.24	13.04	14.90	11.52	43.40	12.54
10b	35.10	25.46	28.56	27.15	27.69		25.45
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: E.H.Laos y J.C.Chaves: 'Estructura de la distribución del ingreso en México', Comercio Exterior, Vol.29, No.5, (Mexico 1979) quoted in Hardy (1982).

The table above gives evidence as to why some commentators believe that the present structure of income distribution in Mexico, is as bad as it was in the Profiriato regime immediately prior to the Mexican Revolution (Cockcroft 1985)<sup>5</sup>. At any rate, the table makes clear that the lowest 20 per cent of the population have seen their share reduce from 5.5 per cent of the total income in 1950 to 3.3 per cent in 1977. The top 20 per cent maintained their share at a little under 60 per cent between 1950 and 1970, but saw it decline to 55 per cent between 1970 and 1977.<sup>6</sup> But clubbing the top 20 per cent together conceals an

important bit of statistic. It is the top 5 per cent which has seen their share decline from 35 to 25 per cent, on the other hand, the next 15 per cent has seen their incomes increase from 24 to 30 per cent. Taken together with the fact that the bottom decile has seen its share decline from 2 to 1 per cent, their overall distribution of income in Mexico has worsened. At any rate, a somewhat weaker nonetheless important, conclusion can certainly be drawn from the evidence presented above—growth in Mexico has done little to reduce, what has historically been, a highly unequal income distribution.

It is not simply the fact that the income distribution is extremely skewed, but also that the bottom 40 per cent, in absolute terms, earn very little. The bottom 40 per cent has maintained its share at 11 per cent of total income. The per capita income of this group, at current prices, is \$300, which is below the officially estimated poverty line. The decline in the share of the lowest 20 per cent, which has been referred to earlier, has meant the 'immiserization' of the subsistence farmer and the landless labourer, the major constituents of this group (Hardy 1982). Bergsman (1980) reports that the average real income of this group declined between 1968-75. In 1978, the average real income on subsistence farms was \$80, which is less than a quarter of the officially estimated poverty line (Hardy 1982).

The fact that absolute levels of income are very low is reflected by nutrition levels and infant mortality rates. If one looks at the national averages of indicators like nutrition level, infant mortality, life expectancy etc. Mexico would do fairly well. But these averages tell only one part of the story. The other part of the story is that all these indicators would show a high regional variation. The Nutrition Institute of Mexico, which conducted regional surveys, reports that 50 per cent of the Mexican population consumes a diet which leads to chronic malnutrition, especially among women and children. The national average for infant mortality in 1975 was 49 deaths for 100 live births. The upper bound for this average was a very high 76.3, which obtains for the Tlaxcala district, and a lack of nourishment and safe drinking water were considered to be the main causes.

If anything were to make a dent on this rather skewed income distribution and high levels of absolute poverty (at least on the latter) it would be a high rate of growth of employment. But Mexico's strategy of industrialization has not allowed that either. 50 per cent of the labour force of 18 million is either underemployed or without a job (Hardy 1982).

Part of the problem lies in the very high rate of growth of the overall population. Fertility trends shows that finally Mexico might be seeing a fall in the population rate of growth, but it is still around 3 per cent, which means an addition of two million people every year. This has meant a steady rate of increase of the labour force. Between 1960-80 the working population grew at an average rate of 3 per cent per annum (Looney 1985). In 1960, the labour force was growing at the



rate of 400,000 p.a., but by 1980 this had shot up to 900,000 p.a. All this despite the fact that Mexico's participation rate is fairly low—a mere 29 per cent of the economically active population (Hardy 1982).

In recent times, the Lopez Portillo presidency did see a fairly phenomenal increase in labour absorption by the economy. By 1977-81 an estimated four million jobs were created, realizing a rate of growth of employment far above that of the labour force (Hamilton 1986). But in the economic downturn that marked most of the next presidency, Abel Beltran de Rio, director of Wharton's Mexico Project, estimated that Mexico will have lost over 40 per cent of the jobs created between 1977-81 (quoted in Carr 1986).

Slow growth in employment is a result of a development strategy that has emphasised capital intensive production in both agricultural and industry. The capital intensive nature of agricultural production is evident from the fact that, whereas in the early 1950's a one percent increase in output saw a 0.28 per cent increase in employment, by the 1960's this had dropped to 0.11 per cent, largely due to increased mechanization (Hardy 1982, Hewit de Alcantra 1974). The fact that Mexico's labour productivity tripled between 1950-80 (Looney 1985) whereas employment has not kept pace with the increase in the labour force reflects the capital intensive nature of production.

I chose to discuss income distribution and poverty together because each of them have a bearing on the size of the home market. From what has been discussed above it is amply clear that not only is the size of the home market restricted, but that a low rate of growth of employment has meant that its expansion has been slow. Mexico has today opted for export led growth, presumably in the hope that the growth impulses so generated would lead to a widening of the market. But if this does not happen, it will merely lead to the disarticulation of one market from the economy, which would eventually constrain its growth.<sup>7</sup>

## AGRICULTURE

Mexico: Sectoral Growth Rates (percentages)

	1939/46	1947/56	1957/66	1967/76	1977/81
Real GDP	5.5	6.9	6.7	5.9	7.4
Agriculture	3.2	7.8	4.8	0.1	5.0
Manufacturing	7.1	7.2	8.5	7.1	7.7

Source: ELCA (various issues) quoted in Fitzgerald (1985)

Mexico: Sectoral Decadal Growth Rates (percentages)

	1940/50	1950/60	1960/70	1970/80
Real GDP	6.9	5.6	7.0	5.5
Agriculture	5.1	4.6	3.7	2.4
Manufacturing	8.1	6.5	8.8	6.7
Services	7.0	5.6	6.8	5.2

Growth rates calculated at 1975 prices

Source: Looney (1985)

The tables presented above give quite different pictures of the pattern of agricultural growth in Mexico. Whereas Fitzgerald's calculation would show a very unstable pattern of agricultural growth, with a peak of 7.8 per cent and a trough of 0.1 per cent, Looney's figures paint a picture of secular decline, with neither government investment in irrigation nor the green revolution making any difference to this trend. As Hewit de Alcantara in her seminal study on Mexican agriculture proves, neither of the above conclusions is valid.

A minor part of the difference in growth rates can be explained by the fact that Looney and Fitzgerald use different sources for their data. Some of it is explained by the choice of the base year—Fitzgerald uses 1960 as base year, whereas Looney is using 1975. The rest of it has to do with periodisation. Fitzgerald is using a peak-to-peak and a trough-to-trough periodisation, and as with any piece of data whose growth rate fluctuates a fair bit that is a better periodisation to use.

Given that state policy has always had a considerable impact on growth in agriculture, Fitzgerald's periodisation also brings out quite clearly the different phases of state policy and their impact on the rates of growth—the second phase which was the phase of government investment in irrigation, the third which was the green revolution phase and the fifth which was the Sistema Alimenticio Mexicano (SAM) phase. Fitzgerald also clearly brings out the crisis which Mexican agriculture found itself in the midsixties, to which SAM was thought to be an answer.<sup>8</sup> We shall look at each of these phases in some detail later.

Before discussing state policy and agricultural growth, it might be useful to devote a few lines to land use and ownership patterns in Mexican agriculture, so as to put this discussion in perspective. To quote Hardy, 'Nature has not been too kind to Mexico...' The country's topography and semi-arid climate restrict the cultivable area to 125 million hectares. The problems start with an extremely lop-sided land use pattern. The ranchers, who have considerable political clout, have cornered about half the cultivable land for purposes of extensive grazing. Another 22 per cent is given to forests and only about 25 per cent is given over to crop cultivation.

Add to this an extremely unequal distribution of land and one begins to get a notion of the kind of handicap Mexico started out with. Seventy four per cent of the land holdings with an average of ten hectares or less account for only 1.6 per cent of the area, whereas 7 per cent of the holdings with an average of 100 hectares or more account for 94.6 per cent. The ownership of cropland is only slightly less unequal—3 per cent of the holdings account for 63 per cent of the land and 85 per cent of the holdings account for less than 16 per cent (Hardy 1982).

The lack of land and its highly unequal distribution underline the need for land reform. Land reform will always be important for Mexico, even if only in terms of rhetoric, because land to the tiller was one of the cornerstones of the Mexican Revolution and consequently is

something of a sacred cow for most Mexicans. The Ladejinsky Report (Ladejinsky 1966) while accepting the fact that a not insignificant amount of progress had been made since 1910, felt that much still remains to be done.

In 1910, 95 per cent of the population did not own any land. But despite the revolution, it was not until the Cardenas presidency (1934-39) did land reforms really take place. In 1940, 25 million hectares were redistributed and then after a lull, between 1959-65 another 16 million hectares.<sup>9</sup> After that, though land reforms have been invoked regularly by incoming presidents, little has been done about it.

A major innovation of the land reform process in Mexico has been the creation of the institution of the ejido, a land holding unit which was to become the basis for cooperative farming, under the auspices of the state. An ejido refers to a communal tenure to which members had 'usufruct' rights. The term ejido refers to communal land as well as the community of peasants who live on it (Stavenhagen 1986).

According to the 1970 Census, there were two million ejidos, of which 1.2 million were classified as subsistence farms, 700,000 as traditional farms and only 120,000 had access to modern farming techniques (Hardy 1982).

The problem with the land reform process was not just the fact that it was slow but also it was not able to guarantee security of tenure to the ejidatario, nor was it able to help him raise his standard of living. It of course has not helped matters that ejidal ownership is 'very complex and carefully circumscribed.'

According to Ladejinsky (1966), 'An ejidatario may pass his land only to his children. He may not sell or rent it, and since he does not possess the land outright, he may not mortgage it to secure a loan. If he fails to cultivate his land for two successive years, it reverts back to the ejido; the land is supposed to revert if he rents the land to others.' Without security of tenure the ejidatario is at the mercy of the local bosses and is being de facto dispossessed of his land. One of the most frequent infringements on ejido land is from the powerful ranchers.<sup>10</sup> Besides this, what ejidatarios there are, rarely get the kind of state support necessary to make them economically viable. With little access to either credit or modern farming techniques, the ejidatario is, by and large, left to fend for himself (Hardy 1982, Hewit de Alcantara 1974).

To summarize then, Mexican agriculture is characterized by an extremely unequal distribution of land, a large number of small holders whose only access to any factor of production is their own labour. Neither do these small holders have land titles which can be used as collateral nor state support. Given the circumstances under which the ejido operates, the only way it can be made viable is with state support and a small farmer oriented agricultural development policy. In the 1940's industrialization was the philosophy of economic progress and agriculture was looked at as a mere adjunct which was to provide

cheap wage goods and raw materials. What the process of industrialization required was an assured supply of wage goods and raw materials and the large landlords who supplied a bulk of the marketable surplus were presumed to be in a position to supply this.

There are essentially three major policy initiatives which the state has undertaken in agriculture. *First, the expansion of irrigated area in the early 40s. Second, the green revolution strategy which really took off in the latter half of the fifties. Third, the SAM of the early eighties.*

Between 1942-64 farm output grew at a compound rate of 5.1 per cent. But this average figure does not give a complete picture. Between 1942-45 when massive investments in irrigation were taking place the rate of growth was 3.6 per cent p.a.. It was in the period 1945-56 that the full impact of this investment was felt and growth rates soared to 6.9 per cent. This phenomenally high rate of growth was not simply due to an increase in irrigated area. It is to be explained by the fact that along with an increase in irrigated area there was also an increase in cultivated area. It was only after the increase in cultivable area slackened off and the potential for raising yields through irrigation was nearly exhausted, that in the latter half of the fifties farmers started adopting the new green revolution package. The fact that in the early years of the green revolution farmers were slow in taking to it, is demonstrated by the growth rate of crop production which was a lowly 2.5 per cent. Between 1961-64 the green revolution technology took a firmer hold and the rate of growth increased to 4.9 per cent, but this could not be sustained and it fell off to 1.2 per cent for the period 1965-70, marking the beginning of a long period of stagnation in Mexican agriculture (Hewit de Alcantara 1974).

Whatever the other problems with this strategy, it certainly achieved what it set out to do. Mexico was self-sufficient in foodgrains by the late 1950s. Imports of food products which was 13.9 per cent of all imports, came down to 3.7 per cent in 1955. By 1959-62 import of food products as a percentage of total agricultural output came down to between 0.3 to 0.9 from a high of between 2 to 5 per cent. Prices of foodgrains were kept low. Hewit de Alcantara, quoting a study on Mexican agriculture, says 'wholesale prices of unprocessed food relative to the prices of non-food and processed food trended down during both 1940-53 and 1954-65 with the fastest rate of decrease occurring in the latter period. Crop items were the dominant force behind the trend. . .'. With state policy promoting the production of non-food crops on irrigated land agricultural exports also went up. Between 1950-60 agriculture accounted for nearly half of the export earnings of Mexico.

It was not just that government investment brought more land under irrigation, but it was that the rest of investment in infrastructure, credit and technical assistance was also concentrated in these irrigated enclaves. This resulted in a massive difference in productivity between

irrigated and non-irrigated areas. A CIDA study reports that irrigated holdings used about five to twelve times more (in value terms) fertilizers, insecticides and HYV seeds than non-irrigated holdings. Consequently between 1946-62 growth of productivity in irrigated areas, for all crops, was 3.6 per cent p.a., as opposed to 1.3 per cent p.a. for unirrigated areas.

There is a geographical dimension to this policy also. Most of the land brought under irrigation after 1940 was in the north and northwestern parts of the country. P.L. Yates (quoted in Hewit de Alcantara 1974) reports that in 1960 the districts with the highest productivity in both land and labour were Baja California, Tamualipas, Sinaloa and Sonora, all in the north and with large irrigated areas, and the districts at the bottom of the scale, Tlaxcala and Puebla, were in southern and central Mexico respectively. In fact another study reports that on an index of relative poverty, south and central Mexico stood higher in 1960 than in either 1921 and 1940. The crops traditionally associated with rainfed agriculture and therefore with south and central Mexico have been corns and beans, whereas cotton and wheat have been the important crops in the irrigated north. Predictably, it has been corn and beans which has been below the national average monetary return per hectare since 1945 (Hewit de Alcantara 1974).

The AIDA study referred to above stratified agricultural holdings into five categories on the basis of their value of their annual production and capacity to provide employment - infra-subsistence, sub-family, family, medium multi-family and large multi-family.<sup>11</sup> The study found that on the basis of this categorisation 97 per cent of the privately held minifundios<sup>12</sup> and 83 per cent of all ejido plots were in the two poorest strata.

#### Measuring Differences in Access to Land and Capital Between CIDA Livelihood Strata, 1960

Strata	<i>Indicators of Scale</i>		<i>Indicators of Intensity</i>		Value of prod.
	Cultivable area	Value of farm	Irrigated area	Value of machinery	
I	1	1	0	1	1
II	4	4	6	5	6
III	12	14	50	40	25
IV	40	50	350	400	100
V	80	500	2500	2000	750

I-Infra-subsistence, II-Sub-family, III-Family  
IV-Medium multi-family, V-Large multi-family

Source: CIDA quoted in Hewit de Alcantara (1974)

Relative Quantity and Quality of Land and Capital  
by CIDA Categories, 1960 (percentages)

Strata	No. of farms	Value of agri. prod	Total Value of farm	Value of machinery	Area	
					a	b
I	50.3	4.2	5.4	1.3	10.6	—
II	33.8	17.1	13.8	6.5	23.4	3
III	12.6	24.4	22.6	17.0	20.0	26
IV	2.8	22.0	19.3	31.4	15.1	33
V	0.5	32.3	37.6	43.8	30.0	39

Under Area column (a)-cultivable and (b)-irrigated

Source: CIDA *ibid.*

The table given above show the marked difference in access to resources which different tenure groups have. The CIDA study concluded that 'the gap in 1960 between poorest and richest, where land was concerned, must be measured in multiples of ten; for the value of production, differences were in multiples of one hundred; and when the value of capital was taken into account, there was a distinction of more than a thousand times between extreme groups.'. The latter table reveals that 0.5 per cent of the agricultural holdings controlled 30 per cent of cultivable land, 39 per cent of irrigated land, 44 per cent of the value of all machinery and 38 per cent of all capital, whereas 50 per cent of the holdings commanded only 11 per cent of Mexico's cultivable land, none of which was irrigated, 1 per cent of all machinery and only 5 per cent of total capital. It is because of a resource and income pattern such as the one detailed above that Morris Singer remarked 'every shred of evidence points to a highly unequal, and probably inequitable, division of income. . . within agriculture. . . (By) the late fifties the time had come for Mexico to modify both its income distribution and structure of demand,' (Singer 1969).

The criticism of the agricultural policy is from the point of view of equity and not of growth, because, as has been mentioned above, in terms of growth it was a successful strategy. But by mid-sixties agricultural growth had fallen drastically and went in for nearly a decade of stagnation. Some of the elements of an answer as to why this stagnation came about can be found in the discussion above, but it would not provide a complete one. The missing element is the pricing policy for agriculture adopted by the Mexican government.

The Mexican government's agricultural policy had three elements - investment in irrigation, provision of cheap credit and inputs (nominally to both irrigated and unirrigated areas, but *de facto* to the irrigated ones only) and a relative price structure which favoured production of crops for cattle feed (soya, sorghum, alfalfa) and for export (tomatoes, strawberries and flowers).

The share of public investment in agriculture has declined from 20 per cent in 1940 to 13.1 per cent in 1979 and since 90 per cent of it was in irrigation, this decline has essentially resulted in the stagnation of irrigated area. This is important because according to Hewit de Alcantara the period which registered the highest rate of growth was 1945-56 (growth rate - 6.9 per cent) which was preceded by a massive burst of irrigation investment between 1942-45. Not only was it the case that the guarantee prices of food crops just did not increase. Between 1963-72, the prices of corn wheat and bean remained constant in nominal terms. After that the price of maize has risen but in real terms still remains below the 1965 level. As compared to this the real price of sorghum was, in the early eighties, 36 per cent above its 1965 level. It is these two factors on which the onus of agricultural stagnation lies.

Area under cultivation has shown no increase since 1966. While the north has seen increase in cultivated and irrigated (mostly private) area, the area under rainfed agriculture has actually declined. Between 1965-74 it fell from 12.5 million to 10.8 million hectares (Hardy 1982). Out of total cultivated area of 30 million hectares (Looney 1985) this meant a drop of nearly 6 per cent, nowhere near made up by increase in cultivated area under irrigation. Yields in traditional (read rainfed) agriculture have been low and costs have increased faster than food prices prompting small farmers to cultivate only a part of their land, leaving the rest fallow or renting it out.

It was in an effort to get out of this impasse, that somewhat belatedly, in 1980, President Portillo unveiled the Sistema Alimenticio Mexicano (Mexican Food System or SAM). The aims were straightforward enough - to guarantee all Mexicans an adequate level of nutrition and achieve self-sufficiency in food production. It was innovative in the sense that it had a holistic approach to food production, where not only were issues relating to agricultural production addressed, but also to interrelated problems of distribution, processing and consumption.<sup>13,14</sup>

The radical change in the agricultural policy framing can be gauged from the fact that policy framers started out from the consumption end and not the production side of the food question. A 'basic food basket' was identified and on the basis of that crops which required a major effort to stimulate production singled out. The government came out with a series of programmes under which self-sufficiency in corn and bean production was supposed to be achieved by 1982 and in rice, wheat and in certain oils by 1985 (Grindle 1985). These programmes were supposed to stimulate production of the targeted crops in areas of rainfed agriculture, so as to benefit as large a chunk as possible of Mexico's peasantry. The government's belief was that significant increases in productivity was possible in these areas, through the use of production incentives, but 'without requiring any radical changes in technology' (Luiselli 1980, quoted in Grindle 1985).

SAM was conceived as a massive system of subsidies. Starting with pivotal ones like the prices of crops (guaranteed prices for corn, soyabeans, wheat and sorghum were raised above international levels and that of beans brought very close to it.<sup>15</sup> to subsidized credit, fertilizer and seed, provision of crop insurance as well as subsidies to processors<sup>16</sup> and consumers. The money to fund an expensive programme like SAM (it was to cost the state exchequer \$7 billion in the first two years) was possible because of Mexico's then new found oil wealth. It was an attempt to use oil revenues productively (in fact Meissner who is a SAM protagonist subheaded his 1987 article—a strategy for *sowing petroleum (italics mine)*<sup>17</sup>.

If food production is taken as an index then SAM was a resounding success. Although production in 1981 was also aided by favourable weather conditions, an indicator of SAM's success is the fact that much of the increase in production resulted from an expansion of area harvested in basic crops (Grindle 1985). Area harvested in basic crops increased by 19 per cent, production by 22 per cent and food imports dropped to 2.5 million tonnes in 1981. Impressive results by any standards, but before taking a stand one should also look at which segment of the rural economy contributed these increases, because given SAM's clearly identified target group - peasants from Mexico's rainfed agriculture areas - it is there that the touchstone of success lies.

Between 1970-80 Mexico's irrigated areas contributed 15.4 and 19.3 per cent of the corn and the bean crop respectively. In 1981, this went up to 23.3 and 26.8 per cent respectively. Rates of growth in irrigated areas was 2.5 to 5 times greater than the rainfed areas. In the irrigated district of Sonora corn production went up by 188 per cent, but in the rainfed districts Morelos and Daxaca it declined over the period 1980-81. With different magnitudes the story repeats itself for fertilizer use. It is difficult to make a definite statement on the basis of just this data, but it would not be too improbable to surmise that a significant proportion of SAM subsidies were captured by the irrigated farms out to make a quick kill, and that SAM possibly reinforced existing inequalities without any lasting gains for the rainfed sector.

At any rate, in 1982, the petroleum bubble burst and one of the first casualties was the subsidies to the agricultural sector. The cut back and the poor weather conditions saw production fall by 0.4 per cent and expected food imports from USA was to be over 9 million tonnes.

If there is a moral of the SAM experience, it is that subsidies of the order envisaged by SAM are difficult to sustain in a resource crunch and therefore a subsidy based programme cannot be the answer to structural problems. One of the major mistakes SAM framers committed, is trying to replicate irrigated farming technology in rainfed/semi-arid areas. Agricultural practices and the kind of seed used, among other things are different under the two regimes and agricultural research has to accept this difference and come up with practices suitable for rainfed agriculture.



Given Mexico's present model of industrialization, the near stagnant rainfed areas are integral to it, in as much as it provides a reservoir of cheap labour, which in the face of starvation in the countryside, is willing to work for a pittance. But this reservoir is far too large for the requirements of a reserve army, and therefore the ruling class needs a non-capitalist peasant economy, which at little or no cost to the capitalist segment of the economy can sustain this reservoir of unskilled labour. But if Mexico is serious about raising the standard of living in the countryside, then it has to forget soft options like SAM and think of hard ones like comprehensive land reforms, as in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, for the dynamics of the small and the large farm are very different and it is very difficult to combine a set of policies which will be advantageous to both. Or, on the other hand, she has to choose a path which, given Mexico's history would be equally difficult - disband the ejido and allow full fledged capitalist agriculture. If events in Mexico are anything to judge by (witness the agriculture law passed in 1980 which de facto regularises renting of ejido land) it is the latter path which Mexico will take, though not because of a deliberately thought out policy, but because of the logic of the invisible market.

## INDUSTRY

Over the period under study, Mexican industry has consistently shown remarkably high rates of growth. A look at Fitzgerald's sectoral growth rates table (quoted in the agriculture section) confirms this. Between 1939/46 the rate of growth was 7.1 per cent, 1947/56 - 7.2 per cent, 1957/66 - 8.5 per cent, 1967/76 - 0.5 per cent, and 1977/81 it was 7.7 per cent (Fitzgerald 1985). By any set of standards a remarkable performance.

Mexican industrialization is a post-Great Depression phenomena. It was then that, faced with increased protectionism from industrialised countries, Mexico's primary export led growth model collapsed. She then, like many other countries of Latin America, decided to turn inward and adopted import substitution at the consumer goods end, as a strategy of industrialization. Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI), remained the dominant model until the mid-seventies, when it was replaced by diversified export promotion and import liberalization (Singh and Ghosh 1988, Gereffi and Evans 1982).

Gereffi and Evans periodise the ISI phase into horizontal (1930-55) and vertical (1955-70) ISI. Horizontal ISI refers to local production of consumer non-durables and assembly of consumer durables. Vertical ISI is a logical follow up from the horizontal phase, in that it internalises all the phases in the production of both consumer non-durables as well as durables. More importantly, vertical ISI also seeks backward integration into intermediate and capital goods. The distinction which Gereffi and Evans make, is useful, because it allows us to take notice of a distinct though related phase in the industrialization process of the

Mexican economy. It would, I think, be wrong to treat the entire ISI phase in an undifferentiated fashion.

What has been the nature of this industrialization with regard to the structure of industries that it has thrown up? This is an important query for this structure would define (not just by itself but in conjunction with other elements) the boundary as well as the trajectory of growth of the economy. The Index of Industrial Production (1970 = 100) would be a good starting place to study the structure of industries thrown up by this growth process. The following table details the weights in the Index.

Index of Industrial Production (Base 1970)

Food, Beverages and Tobacco	26.5
Textiles	10.3
Footwear and Clothing	13.5
Wood	1.9
Paper and Paper Products	2.5
Printing and Publishing	3.2
Rubber Products	1.4
Chemical Products	8.1
Non-metallic Minerals	5.1
Basic Metals	5.4
Machinery	7.9
Transport Equipment	6.6
Other <sup>19</sup>	7.6
Total	100.0

Source : ECLA Survey (1975)

The Index reveals a fairly diversified production structure in terms of coverage. The fact of ISI at the consumer goods end is also fairly obvious. It also reveals the major structural problem of Mexican industry—the lack of significant intermediate and capital goods sector—which, in an effort to maintain high real rates of growth, has meant an aggravation of BOP pressures. From the index it is clear that there are only four industrial sub-sectors which can be classified as intermediate and capital goods sub-sectors—chemical products, non-metallic minerals, basic metals and machinery. Transport equipment has not been included because Mexico's transport equipment industry essentially produced cars, which would fall under consumer durables. The four sub-sectors taken together have a weightage of 26.5 per cent, of which machinery barely forms a third, substantiating the contention of an underdeveloped intermediate and capital goods sector. Banco de Mexico figures by type of manufacturing activity give a somewhat different picture.

Type of Manufacturing Activity, 1960-74  
(percentages, at 1960 prices)

	1960	1970	1974
Nondurable Consumer Goods	61.1	50.3	47.0
Intermediate Goods	27.6	31.7	33.5
Durable Consumer and Capital Goods	9.1	15.7	17.5
Other Industries	2.2	2.3	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : Cockcroft (1985)

According to this table whereas the 1960 structure was lopsided, after that the economy has moved towards correcting it, and by 1974 intermediate, capital and consumer durables accounted for a not insignificant 41 per cent. The table of course biases the picture, by clubbing consumer durables and capital goods, and given the fact that Mexico was at that point import substituting at the consumer durables end (Gereffi and Evans put the period between 1955-70), it is more than likely that the movement from 9.1 per cent to 15.7 per cent (1960 to 1970) would reflect their increasing weightage in the production structure. If this be so, then even according to Banco de Mexico data the capital goods industry is underdeveloped. There are two pieces of statistics - the structure of Mexican imports and the import intensity of GDP - which might help one in drawing some tentative (tentative because data for what would be considered watertight evidence is not available) conclusions on this issue.

Structure of Mexican Imports (percentages)

	1970	1978	1980	1981	1982
Consumer Goods	9.4	6.1	13.1	11.9	10.5
Intermediate Goods	58.8	47.8	59.4	56.6	57.9
Capital Goods	30.8	34.8	27.1	31.0	31.0
Total <sup>20</sup>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : ECLA Surveys (various issues)

The table shows the remarkable stability which, intermediate and capital goods taken together, have maintained over the years. They were almost 90 per cent of imports in 1970 as also in 1982, with a drop in between to 82.6 per cent in 1978, only to climb back in subsequent years. Of course this percentage by itself says very little but a near unchanging pattern of imports, coupled with a ballooning of the trade deficit (Ghosh and Singh, 1988), does point to the fact that domestic production capabilities of intermediate and capital goods is underdeveloped in relation to demand. The other piece of data which would help substantiate, to some extent, my argument about an

underdeveloped intermediate and capital goods sector is the import intensity of production.

Import Intensities of Production ( percentages) <sup>21</sup>

	A	B
1973	5.7	18.8
1974	6.6	20.7
1975	6.3	21.1
1976	5.4	19.5
1977	5.0	16.1
1978	5.2	19.4
1979	6.3	23.1
1980	7.8	27.9
1981	8.9	32.4

*Note:* Column A is imports (deflated) as percentage of GDP at 1970 prices and column B is imports of intermediate and capital goods (deflated) as a percentage of GDP in manufacturing at 1970 prices.

*Source:* Calculated using trade and GDP data from various ECLA Survey issues.

The table is quite revealing. Barring two years - 1976 and 1977 - one out of which was a recession year (1976), the import intensity has increased in a steady fashion and towards the end of the seventies gathered momentum. The trend in overall GDP as well as GDP in manufacturing is similar, which is not surprising given that the bulk (nearly 90 per cent) are manufactured imports. Taking the ratio of the rate of growth of imports (deflated) to the GDP growth rates (as a proxy of imports (deflated) to the GDP growth rates as a proxy for import elasticity of GDP) and barring recession years the ratio stood between 3.4 and 1.2 over the period 1974-81. That is to say, in upswing years the rate of growth of imports is far higher than the rate of growth GDP, which proves the point that Mexican economic growth has become import intensive. Therefore, from the above one can draw two tentative conclusions: first, the structure of Mexican manufacturing is lopsided because of an underdeveloped intermediate and capital goods sector; and second, economic growth has become far more import intensive. One of the reasons for increasing import intensity could be that manufacturing production has become capital intensive.

A World Bank study (World Bank, 1979) reports that the most dynamic sectors of Mexican manufacturing are food, beverages and tobacco, chemicals, paper, chemical petroleum products and coal products. These are dynamic in that these industries display high labour productivity, high rates of growth and their size is larger than what would be expected in an economy the size of Mexico. On the same counts the least dynamic are textiles, clothing, printing and publishing, and leather products. The study also reports that the deviations of domestic from international prices increased from 1970 to 1975,<sup>22</sup> which

was taken as an index of inefficiency. The study concludes that 'Mexico's manufacturing sector performs well in products that are capital intensive, high technology and/or mineral based while it performs less well in traditional low technology and labour intensive processes'.

A study on incremental capital/labour ratio for the Mexican economy between 1971-74 found that chemicals, food products and paper products had incremental capital/labour ratios of \$26300, \$26000 and \$25500 respectively, measured at 1970 prices. There were only two more industry groups higher than these - iron and steel and rubber products. At the bottom of the pile are metal products, wood products and tobacco products. Interestingly enough, using this same study we calculated that seven (with a collective weight of almost 60 per cent) of the thirteen industry groups mentioned in the Index of Industrial Production had a high incremental capital/labour ratio, of \$10,000 or more, that is to say they were highly capital intensive.

It therefore would not be wrong to conclude, despite (or maybe because of) the phenomenal rate of growth which the Mexican manufacturing sector has seen, production is both capital and import intensive and consequently, whereas on the one hand, it adds to BOP pressures because of an underdeveloped capital goods sector, on the other it does not absorb labour fast enough to answer the country's unemployment problem.

Other than being constrained on the BOP side which obviously this policy entails, there is another structural constraint which faces industry—the size of the home market. As pointed out in the section on income distribution etc., growth in Mexico has also meant a worsening of the income distribution, high levels of absolute poverty and high unemployment. In the circumstances there is a large chunk of Mexico's population which simply does not earn enough to demand the consumer goods that industry provides. Faced with a small market of high income earners, with rapidly changing tastes and a craving for importables, Mexican industry has in answer developed a capital intensive, high cost and inefficient production structure and today the only hope it sees of expanding its market is externalizing the market. That strategy is fraught with other pitfalls, but that would be going outside the ambit of this paper.

A recurrent theme in the literature on the Mexican economy is that most of the problems of the manufacturing sector arise because Mexico used market protection as a tool of ISI and this introduces distortions into the economy. This argument fails to realise that it is not the freeness or otherwise of a market which causes inefficiency, but as Nayyar (1989) points out it is lack of competition. As he points out the lack of competition and protection cannot be equated, for it is possible, as in S. Korea to engender competition within a protected market and achieve efficiency possibly at a cost less than had an unfettered free market been used.

## BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

Thus both agriculture and industry are beset with structural problems, despite which growth has occurred. This has essentially meant shifting the burden on to the BOP, manifesting itself in a ever widening trade deficit. A look at export to GDP ratios will clarify the point.

Export Ratios (percentages) <sup>23</sup>

	C	D
1975	2.7	2.2
1976	2.7	2.2
1977	3.3	2.5
1978	3.5	2.5
1979	3.7	2.3
1980	4.3	1.6
1981	4.7	0.8

Note: C is the ratio of overall exports (deflated) to GDP at constant 1970 prices and D is the ratio of non-oil exports (deflated) to GDP at constant 1970 prices.

Whereas the overall export ratio has almost secularly increased, the non-oil export ratio has in the first half of the period stagnated and in the later half declined. This asymmetry in the movement of the two ratios is explained by oil exports. Mexico discovered vast reserves of oil in 1976, when oil exports were barely \$0.6 billion dollars, out of total exports of \$3.3 billion. In 1981, oil exports had mounted to \$14.4 billion out of a total export of \$19.9. Despite the huge increases in oil revenues not only have export ratios always remained below import ratios, but the gap started widening. In the circumstances a widening trade deficit is what one would expect.

The way Mexico's foreign trade has developed is one half of the story of Mexico's BOP problems. The other half has to do with resource mobilization. Faced with the imperatives of maintaining a high rate of growth, and unable, in the face of an intransigent bourgeoisie unwilling to share the burden of growth, to raise resources at home, Mexico took the soft option and raised money abroad. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, for her the markets were flush with petro-dollar money with nowhere to go, and Mexico with her new found oil wealth was a haven for all the bankers. The dollar was declining, real interest rates were negative, and everybody concerned naively thought that this would be the state of affairs for sometime to come.

But the day of reckoning came earlier than expected. Almost in quick succession two things happened. First, the dollar started climbing, real interest rates rose and second, the bottom fell out of the oil market. High oil prices was all that was shoring up Mexico's trade account and once price fell there was nothing to tether the account. On the other

hand, the rising dollar and real interest rates led to massive outflows from the service account towards interest payments and amortization and Mexico was in a near irretrievable BOP situation. Finally, the straw that broke the camel's back, was capital flight of over \$5 billion on expectations of a peso devaluation. Beleaguered from all sides, Mexico announced a moratorium on debt servicing, and the world finally woke up to the crisis.

In the post-mortem that followed there were two schools of thought as to why it all happened. One is the Bank of Mexico position which essentially blames events outside the control of the economy - rising real interest rates, falling oil and silver prices, protectionism in the industrialised nations circumscribing the export market - for the crisis. The other is the position like the one Singh and Ghosh (1988) take - they agree that all of the above contributed and that to a large extent were outside the control of policy measures. But they add one more reason, which they call 'an avoidable act of public policy' - result of relaxation of import controls.

As is most often the case, all these reasons contributed, and it would be difficult to attribute to any one of the reasons a primacy. One could take a position somewhat like Diaz Alejandro's that Mexico would have most probably seen a recession, but the severity of the crisis was contributed by factors outside Mexico's control. For me here the question is slightly different - how much of the crisis can be explained by the structural problems of the Mexican economy. Leaving aside the question of how much, it is certainly clear that Mexico's problems on the trade account are certainly structural and unless tackled as such will reappear again. Mexico in an answer to this crisis engineered a recession, decided to go in for an export led strategy in the hope that after the situation on debt has stabilised, increasing exports will pay for the imports, but has made no attempt to correct the problem of import intensive production. De la Madrid thought it best to 'rationalise' the existing model (Hamilton 1986), but rationalisation is not a structural cure.

#### NOTES

1. The word structural here refers to, as being a part of a structure - that is characteristics that are fundamental to the existence of the 'whole'. Therefore, characteristics that are not only a result of the evolution of the Mexican economy, but also impinge upon its trajectory of growth (or the lack of it).
2. The PRM incorporated the major mass organizations, and grouped them into four sectors: labour, peasant, popular and the military. The popular sector was essentially a catch all sector, meant to give representation to all those not covered by the peasant and labour unions. In 1940, the military merged with the popular sector.
3. A somewhat dramatic affirmation of the Rowthorn-Wells hypothesis that at constant prices the share of services remains more or less the same.
4. Mexico's version of large landlords.

5. The top decile has been split up equally into 10a and 10b. Due to unavailability of data in 1975 10a and b have been clubbed together and the number mentioned along the 10a row.
6. It is interesting to note that the decline in the share of the top 20 per cent took place during the presidency of Luis Echeverria, who was possibly after Cardenas, Mexico's most interventionist (variously called radical or populist) president.
7. It is of course a point which the Mexican ruling class is not unaware of. Presidents, past and present, have made repeated references to it, but it has remained at the level of rhetoric. To quote one, President Diaz Ordaz (1964-69) at the beginning of his term proclaimed, 'Without a market there is no production. And without purchasing power for the masses there is no market'.
8. There are of course many other estimates - to mention one, Hardy (1982), reports a growth rate of 5 per cent between 1950-65, after which, until 1980, the rate of growth declined to 1 per cent p.a. Hardy does not include the SAM years, 1980-81, other wise for the latter period the rate of growth would have gone up somewhat. At any rate, he would agree with Fitzgerald that, after the mid-sixties, agriculture has been in a crisis.
9. There does not seem to be a concurrence on the exact amount of land redistributed. Hardy (1982), itself, is somewhat confusing, as he quotes a figure of 55 million hectares having been redistributed by 1965 but accounts for only 41 million hectares. Stavenhagen (1986) claims that by 1970 70 million hectares had been transferred. The difference of five years between the Hardy and Stavenhagen time periods (even if one were to assume that every year some land got redistributed) cannot explain the larger figure, because that would have meant a major burst of land redistribution, to which no references have been made in the literature.
10. Part of the reason as to why security of tenure has been difficult to achieve is the fact that to be able to register as an ejidatario, one must have a minimum of four hectares of land. Due to land pressure most ejidatarios received land parcels smaller than the statutory minimum. The original framers of agrarian reforms did not have a clear idea about the nature and role of the ejido and this has changed over the years. At first the ejido was merely a response to political pressures and land hunger of the peasantry. It was, in any case, never the aim of land reform to abolish private property, but to develop a small peasant economy which would act, both, as a safety valve for political unrest, as well as an economic safety cushion (Stavenhagen 1986). Today the ejidos are looked upon as reservoirs of unskilled labour, which migrate to cities, more because of the push rather than pull factor, and help keep wages down.
11. Infra-subsistence farms are those that produced less than a thousand pesos (at 1960 prices) annually; Sub-family farms produced agricultural goods worth between 1000 and 5000 pesos and provided year round work for less than two men; family farms were those whose annual agricultural produce was between 5000 and 25,000 pesos and provided between two and four man years; medium multi-family farms - 25,000 to 100,000 pesos and year round work for twelve men; large multi-family holdings - more than 100,000 worth of agricultural produce and employment of more than twelve man years.
12. Small privately held farms.
13. Among the many studies carried out to assist the framing of SAM, was an influential nutrition study which details the seriousness of the problem facing the food system. It reported that 90 per cent of the rural population and 34 per cent of the urban one did not get their daily requirement of calories. The situation had obviously deteriorated since the nutrition study quoted earlier.
14. The immediate need to come up with a strategy like SAM was two fold. First, the more conventional rural development strategy like Echeverria's PIDER had failed. Something had to be done about food production, because as Meissner (1987) details Mexico's food imports had reached alarming proportions - it had jumped from 0.2 million tonnes in 1965 to 10.3 million tonnes in 1980. In 1979, when Mexico imported 7.5 million tonnes of foodgrain, it accounted for over 36 per cent of its consumption.
15. Interestingly enough soyabean, sorghum and wheat are not rainfed agriculture crops and neither would soyabean and sorghum form a part of the 'basic food basket' as both of these are used as cattle fodder in Mexico. And SAM had sought to reduce the conversion of vegetable into animal protein!
16. In the analysis of Mexico's food problem in SAM documents blame was squarely laid on the excessive reliance on agribusiness multinationas involved in production



as well as processing (Redclift 1987). Consequently the initial reaction of multinationals was adverse (Meissner 1987) but subsequently agribusiness interests were accommodated and gave SAM their seal of approval (Redclift 1987). Subsidies to the food processing industry, where agribusiness is dominant was obviously the cost of accommodation and therefore the criticism of people like Redclift, that whereas the analysis of the problem in SAM documents was correct it was considerably diluted when the policies were framed.

17. Whereas any macro-economics primer would tell one that subsidies constitute a part of consumption expenditure as they do not enhance the productive capacity of the economy.
19. Other includes leather and leather production, manufacturing and repair of metal products.
20. The total does not add up to 100 because of the existence of a category called 'other' which accounts for about 2 per cent of total imports.
21. Ideally, the import intensity should be arrived at by using current values for both imports and GDP. Unfortunately, current values for GDP was not available and therefore, I decided to construct an index for unit value of imports and deflate the import figures with that, so as to approximate volume movements. I of course realise that terms of trade movements have not been taken care of, yet I do not think that the exercise is an illegitimate one and makes some economic sense. For getting at the import intensity of the manufacturing sector import of intermediate and capital goods have been deflated using the same index of unit value of imports, which is permissible given the fact that 90 per cent of the imports fall into these two categories.
22. It is not at all clear as to why deviation from international prices should be taken as an indicator of inefficiency it is neither a necessary or a sufficient condition for inefficiency. After all the vector of international prices reflects a certain structure of comparative advantage, a certain international division of labour, and it does not follow that every country's economic goals are achievable by being a part of that international division of labour.
23. For getting at export ratios again a deflated export value has been used. The deflator is the index of the unit value of exports. This is of course a far more problematic exercise than the one carried out on imports. For in the case of exports the bundle of goods being dealt with is far more varied ranging from wheat to automobiles. Also, in this period oil emerged as a major component of exports, in fact towards the latter part swamping everything else. Therefore, the unit value would hardly be representative. The reasons for yet sticking to it is much the same as with imports, lack of current GDP figures.

## REFERENCES

- Bergsman, J. (1980): 'Income Distribution and Poverty in Mexico', World Bank Staff Working Paper, No. 395.
- Carr, B. (1986): 'The Mexican Economic Debacle and the Labor Movement: A New Era or More of the Same?' In *'Modern Mexico: State, Economy and Social Conflict'* ed. by N. Hamilton and T. Harding, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications.
- Cockrft, J.D. (1983): 'Mexico', New York, *Monthly Review Press*.
- ECLA, (various issues): 'Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean', Santiago, Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Fitzgerald, E.V.K. (1985): 'The Financial Constraint on Relative Autonomy: The State and Capital Accumulation in Mexico, 1940-82' in *'The State and Capital Accumulation in Latin America'* ed. by C. Anglade and L. Fortin, London, Macmillan.
- Gereffi, G. and P. Evans (1982): 'Foreign Investment and Dependent Development: Comparing Brazil and Mexico', *Latin American Research Review*.
- Grindle, M. (1985): 'Rhetoric, Reality, Self-sufficiency: Recent Initiatives in Mexican Rural Development', *Journal of Developing Areas*, 19, January.
- Hamilton, N. (1986): 'State-Class Alliances and Conflicts: Issues and Actors in the Mexican Economic Crisis' in Hamilton and Harding (1986).
- and T. Harding (1986): *'Modern Mexico: State, Economy and Social Conflict'*, eds., Beverly Hills, Sage Publications.

- Hardy, C. (1982): 'Mexican Development Strategy for the 1980s', *World Development*, June.
- Hewit De Alcantara, C. (1976): 'Modernising Mexican Agriculture: Socio-economic Implications of Technological Change, 1940-70', Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Looney, R.E. (1985): 'Economic Policy Making in Mexico: Factors Underlying the 1982 Crisis', Durham, Duke University Press.
- Meissner, F. (1981): 'The Mexican Food System (SAM): A Strategy for Sowing Petroleum', *Food Policy*, 6, November.
- Singer, M. (1969): 'Growth, Equality and the Mexican Experience', Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Singh, A. and J. Ghosh (1988): 'Import Liberalization and the New Industrial Strategy: An analysis of their impact on output and employment in the Indian Economy' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number.
- Stavenhagen, R. (1986): 'Collective Agriculture and Capitalism in Mexico: A Way Out or a Dead End' in Hamilton and Harding (1986).
- World Bank (1979): 'Special Study on the Mexican Economy: Major Policy Issues and Prospects', Vol.1, Washington D.C., IBRD, May.
- Redclift, M.R. (1981): 'The Mexican Food System (SAM): Sowing Subsidies, Reaping Apathy', *Food Policy*, 6, November.
- Reynolds, C.W. (1970): 'The Mexican Economy', New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Ros, J. (1987): 'Mexico from oil boom to debt crisis: An analysis of policy responses to external shocks, 1978-85' in 'Debt Crisis and Adjustment in Latin America' ed. by R. Thorp and L. Whitehead, London, Macmillan.

## *Government Intervention and Industrial Restructuring: The Case of South Korea*

In his book, *Public Intervention and Industrial Restructuring in China, India and Republic of Korea*, especially in Chapter 3, A.K. Bagchi reviews government intervention and industrial reconstruction in South Korea. Although Bagchi may be right, I am not satisfied with his view on two counts. First, I find his approach to the study of the historical background to government intervention flawed because he fails to examine the real aspects of Japanese colonialism and foreign aid from the US. In Bagchi's words:

Under the Japanese colonialism, . . . most of the employees in (such) industries were Koreans. Furthermore, many Koreans were more or less forcibly conscripted by the Japanese to work in Japan. Thus Koreans in Japanese-controlled factories in Korea and Japan learned many necessary industrial skills. . . .<sup>1</sup>

But almost all the Korean labourers employed by the Japanese were from the rural areas and were used for hard physical labour. They were alienated from the production process in a way that limited the acquisition of advanced technology. The Japanese intention was just to extract surplus value from the physical potentiality of Korean labourers. In other words, Japanese employer's segregated the heads from the hands of Korean labourers.

Bagchi also beautifies the role of military aid and the military connection between Korea and the US. He seems to have overlooked the unproductive aspects of US foreign aid to Korea. Some questions can be raised here; why did the U.S. continue to increase military aid? Why did the nature of US aid change over the period from the Korean War to the 1960s? Why did the Park regime turn to Japan in the 1960s?

Secondly, Bagchi seems unaware of the fact that the industrialization process in Korea was at the expense of agricultural sector. In the beginning of 1960s, there were two policy objectives for important industrialization in Korea, viz., low wages and low prices of rice, the main food of Korea. And the US programme of PL 480 aid contributed to imperative government policy. At that time, over 60 percent of farmers,

---

\* Dept. of Economics, Gyeongsang National University, Kyung Nam, South Korea.

who were cultivating rice, gave up rice cultivation and were forced to migrate to urban areas to survive. This rural exodus was the source of unlimited labour supply in the 1960's.

The structure of age and sex of the population in the agricultural sector also changed over time [Table I]. Due to the migration, young persons in the age groups 14-19 years and 20-29 years drastically fell, while those in the 40-49 years, 50-59 years and over 60 years age groups gradually increased. And the percentage of women in this sector rose from 36.9 per cent in 1965 to 43.3 per cent in 1985, while that of men fell from 63.1 per cent in 1965 to 56.7 per cent in 1985.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1  
Composition of Farm Population by Ages and Sex  
[percentage]

Year	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985
Age					
14-19	15.3	15.5	13.9	6.6	2.9
20-29	26.0	18.9	18.6	18.0	16.3
30-39	22.2	25.4	21.0	18.7	17.7
40-49	18.9	20.9	21.7	27.1	25.8
50-59	12.8	13.3	17.1	19.5	23.4
60 & above	4.8	6.0	7.8	10.1	14.0
Sex					
Male	63.1	60.0	57.9	56.6	56.7
Female	36.9	40.0	42.1	43.4	43.3

Source: Economic Planning Board, *Annual Report of Economically Active Population*, Seoul, Republic of Korea, Various Issues.

Consequently, the tag of 'ghost villages', where only the old men and women remained in agricultural sector. Thus industrialization in Korea had been advanced at the expense of agricultural sector.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.K. Bagchi, *Public Intervention and Industrial Reconstructing in China, India and Republic of Korea*, ILO ARTEP, New Delhi, 1987, p.32.
2. Jongsoo Park, "Industrial Cycle and Relative Surplus Population in Korea (Korean version)", *Journal of Gyeongsang National University*, Chinju, 26(2), 1987, pp 147-159.

# MANOHAR BOOK SERVICE

2/6 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002  
Phones: 3275162, 3262796

1. *Religion and Pilgrim Tax Under the Company Raj*, NANCY GARDNER CASSELS, 1988, Rs. 150

This monograph is a study of the tangled relationship between the British East India Company and the great Jagannath temple. The Company reinstated the pilgrim tax at Jagannath temple in 1806. The author breaks new ground by outlining a policy articulated by the East India Company in accordance with its "compact" which promised respect for and non-interference with Hindu and Muslim religious customs and institutions.

2. *Labour Pains and Labour Power: Women and Childbearing in India*, PATRICIA JEFFERY, ROGER JEFFERY, & ANDREW LYON, 1989, Rs. 325

Agrarian relations in North India cannot be understood if women and their activities including biological reproduction continue to be marginalized. By skilfully interweaving analysis with the villagers' own voices, the authors who lived in two North Indian villages for many months and talked freely to women and men, provide an accessible and exciting reassessment of women's roles in an agricultural society.

3. *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North-East India*, 1990, SAJAL NAG, Rs. 130

The book is an incisive study of the nationality problem in Assam. It delves deep into the development of Assamese nationality from the pre-colonial era and explains how it culminated in the demand for eviction of Bengalees and transfer of Bengalee Muslim dominated areas from Assam. The study perceptively delineates the role played by the various strata of Assamese society viz. the peasant, the worker, the middle class, the intellectual, the elite and the politician in the development of the nationality question.

4. *Shelter for the Poor in India*, MICHAEL DEWIT & HANS SCHENK (Eds.), 1989, Rs. 135

Essays in this book focus on major issues relating to low cost and/or self-help housing in urban India. Its contents are almost entirely based on specific field experience in Madras on various topics, such as the role of slum-leaders in slum upgrading; the specific socio-economic problems arising from slum upgrading and sites and services policies; the position of tenants; the scope for non-governmental organizations to become involved in a meaningful way in slum policies; and gentrification in low cost housing projects. The role of the World Bank in directing urban housing programmes is highlighted as well.

5. *Fundamentalism Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, JAMES WARNER BJÖRKMAN (Ed.), 1988, Rs. 175

South Asian politics are exceedingly complicated and the religious factor is particularly complex. The increasingly violent role of religion in the region is a stark reality today. This volume presents for public discussion the painful issue of modern religious violence and communal politics in the major countries of South Asia. The meticulously researched essays in the collection examine, explore and explain aspects of religious fundamentalism, self-righteous revivalists and murderous mayhem among the four major faiths of South Asia.

- ◆ For libraries and individuals, 10% discount, post-paid.
- ◆ Special additional discount for *Social Scientist* subscribers.  
Please quote your subscription number with orders.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Piracy in History*

Clinton V. Black, *Pirates of the West Indies*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 136, £. 7.95 pbk.

The dominant imagery of piracy is full of flamboyant daredevils looting and killing with savage brutality all those who dreaded to venture on to the seas or cross their path. In popular mythology, rarely these 'abominable brutes' and 'monsters in human form' were victims of any other power other than the destiny. This mythical history of pirates created and popularised by the modern bourgeois *moralist-historian* is, in the words of Black, 'a distortion and suffers from the common error of judging the past by the moral fashions of the present.' What this excellently written, elegantly illustrated and beautifully produced Cambridge paperback tells us is that there is another side to this story of piracy: a human, socio-economic and politico-historical.

In the *Pirates of the West Indies*, Clinton Black gives us a historical narrative of piracy from its origins during the 16th century to its peak during 1714-1724. The narrative starts with the story of buccaneers like Henry Morgan and Bartholomew Roberts, the forerunners of West Indies piracy. This particular form of piracy—buccaneering and privateering—was the 'direct outcome of Spain's impractical policy of forbidding her colonists the right to trade with 'other nationals' and the consequent necessity for clandestine trade.

The *buccaneers* originally lived on a harmless profession of hunting and trading, were transformed into 'butchers of men' by the Spaniards who drove them out of Hispaniola forests and later, with less success from the Tortuga Island. The hatred for their Spanish persecutors bound the buccaneers into the *Confederacy of the Brethron of the Coast* from diverse social and national composition: runaway bondsmen, castaways, escaped criminals, political and religious refugees and wonderers of every stripe and kind drawn from French, English and Dutch. While politics drove them to the sea, 'an age of appalling brutality' moulded them into cruel desperadoes.

This book is a portrait of 17th century expanding world economy and politics. The buccaneers' ceaseless, savage attacks on the Spanish territories indirectly protected the English, French and Dutch colonies. During the Second Dutch War (1665), the Governor of Jamaica, Sir

Thomas Modyford commissioned buccaneer captains to defend the islands and thus made their activities legal and changed their status to that of privateers. Henry Morgan's life story illustrates the close link between politics, commerce and the rise of piracy (pp. 27-40). 'A basic distinction,' argues Black, 'between buccaneer and pirate was that the former carried the war to the Spanish only, whereas the pirate attacked and stole from all and owed authority to none. When, however, the European governments made privateers of the buccaneers in time of war, open or undeclared . . . by arming them with commissions, their range widened, as in the case of Modyford's use of the buccaneers against the Dutch.' (p. 10). But these commissions could not restrict the operations of pirates; they rather legitimized looting, for the commission could always be stretched.

My commission is large and I  
made it myself,  
And the capstan shall stretch it  
full larger by half . . .

thus runs a ballad on the famous pirate Henry Every (p. 10).

Apart from personal greed there were other factors which influenced them to continue with piracy, though the money they get was 'pittance at the end'. With little choice of employment, once the privateer crews were thrown out of work after the war it was only the piracy which 'offered the prospects of quick gain, a free and easy life and escape from the harsh discipline of the naval and merchant services, especially the severe floggings which drove many seamen to desert and join vessels' (p. 13). Thanks to Black, the young reader is treated to ten incredible life stories of pirates of West Indies: Henry Morgan, Richard Sawkins, Howel Davis, Bartholomew Roberts, George Lowther, Charles Vane, Captain Teach or 'Black beard', Jack Rackham, John Evans and Nicholas Brown, the 'Grand Pirate'. How the oppressive social morality and to some extent the lure of adventure on the seas drove even women into this 'career' is illustrated by the history of two fascinating women pirates—Mary Read and Anne Bonny (pp. 101-117).

With a broad social approach, the author gives us a vivid picture of pirates' social life: while ashore they indulged in 'wild deeds'—women and wine, street brawls, gambling and even willing to spend 'unto a common strumpet five hundred pieces-of-eight only that he might see her naked.' Always flushed with hard liquor, poorly dressed, the pirates could 'melt the dollars' just to forget for a while the tedium and basic pointlessness of their existence. While on piratical voyage or 'on the account' as it was called they beat the grimness of life with music, singing, dancing and often play-acting and mock trials at which each crewman took his turn at being judge and prisoner. This was a cynical form of pleasantry since there was always the possibility that each man would stand before a real judge in a real court of law' (p. 17).

'But, behind it all,' argues Black, 'this heavy drinking probably took the place of something that was missing or lost, as drinking often does, and beneath the comradeship and the swagger, the oaths and the bowls of punch, *was pathos and a sense of tragedy*. The dream of the return home, for those who cherished it, grew dimmer with each voyage and each day' (p. 18). Then why did they continue with this 'pointless existence'? Apparently 'the wretched conditions from which they had escaped' (p. 23) forced them to continue with piracy. Merchant capitalism offered the pirate the option of death as a slave on the plantation; of getting flogged to death on a merchant or navy ship; of getting 'hanged like a dog' (p. 116) once caught as a pirate, or of death in action on the sea as a pirate. It was this societal situation which made the amnesties offered under several Parliamnet Acts of Pardon pointless. Continuing with piracy did not however, mean amassed fortunes. For most of them, if alive, could retire only with a paltry sum, not enough to survive even for a few months. Believe it or not, but the stories of 'burried treasures' by pirates are mainly myths.

Atlury Murali,  
Dept. of History, Central University,  
Hyderabad



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Social Slavery: A modern theme in traditional historiography*

P.A. Gavali, *Society And Social Disabilities Under The Peshwas*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1988, pp. XII + 186, Rs. 150

Social slavery has definitely been one of the greatest evils India suffered since ancient times. Social institutions were systematically developed to maintain and strengthen the pernicious tradition. Under the force of mythically sanctioned tradition, the institution of slavery entailing social disabilities on a significant section of population continued through the ages notwithstanding political invasions, subversions, conquests and defeats. The Hindu rulers of the so-called glorious antiquity, the great Moghul emperors and even the 'enlightened' British rulers have all invariably respected, strengthened and even used the institution. It has permeated the intricate social stratification typical of Indian social milieu. The social stratification entailing inhuman social disabilities on the vast section of people grew more and more stringent and intricate through ages. The book under review by P.A. Gavali attempts to discuss the shape and extent of the forced social disabilities under the Peshwa rulers in Maharashtra.

Hindu tradition had never approved of any strict separation of the mundane and the ecclesiastical. Yet the two powers were formally wielded by separate entities although respecting and assisting each other. But the period under review witnessed a direct combination of the two. This had further complicated the scene. The Peshwa rulers, Brahmin by caste, had stakes in retaining the tradition. They upheld religion and the social structure. With the royal support, the religious superstitions and the social institutions grew more strident, exacting and mandatory. Slightest violation invited severe punishment from royal authorities.

Gavali takes the reader into the intriguing social milieu with commendable ease. Beginning with the discussion of the various superstitions and religious beliefs cherished by the people, he enters in to the discussion of the numerous customs, traditions, rituals, etc., and the way those were fastened by the ruling Peshwas. Belief in

personified Gods having emotions and passions like human beings bore the conception of wrath of these deities calling for remedial 'Shanti Kurmas' (passifying and appeasing rituals). Peshwas promoted these rituals (pp. 80-85).

Mythologies have mentioned eight types of marriages of which six enjoyed religious approval. Most of them were in vogue at one time or the other (pp. 71-73). Polygamy too was approved under certain conditions. But it was more prevalent among nobles and the rich. Peshwas themselves had more than one wives (even upto eleven) and the generals and nobles followed in their foot steps (p. 71). The inhuman tradition of 'sati', though glorified by religion, was practised mainly by the ruling classes—the royal families, their generals, nobility and the aristocrats (pp. 77-78).

Slavery proper was prevalent in all the castes except Brahmins. The circumstances that turned the freemen into slaves were abject poverty, violation of social regulations, natural calamities like floods, draughts, famines, etc. (p. 152). War prisoners were often taken slaves. Women from the enemy side, particularly young and beautiful were invariably taken as slaves. Deaths in wars and epidemics rendered young ladies helpless forcing them to embrace either prostitution or slavery. During famines husbands deserted their wives, helpless mothers sold their children and finally offered themselves as the 'Batiks' to the nobles and the rich (p. 152). The state instead of extending a helping hand to these deserted sections, promoted the heinous practices and even engaged itself in the slave trade in a big way. The Peshwas ordered their generals and sardars to supply as their slaves, beautiful young women from their areas (pp. 160-61).

Given the nature of state, it is not surprising that the state laws compelled beautiful women to become 'Batiks' of the nobles and generals. Adultery was regarded a big crime and both men and women found guilty of it were fined heavily. Failing to pay the fine, the women had to live as a 'Batik' of the persons who had enticed or forced them for intercourse. Sexual intercourse with the 'Batiks' was both common and lawful. 'Rape any beautiful woman you like and have her as a Batik for life' was an acknowledged practice among the generals and noble men (pp. 25-26).

Practice of untouchability is undoubtedly the most obnoxious aspect and long observed practice of Hinduism. This was revived under the Peshwas and strict observation of the minutest details of the tradition in this connection was made mandatory. This increased the predicaments of the untouchables many fold. The author has no doubt discussed all the details of this tradition and its practice, but has avoided the analysis of its effects on the life of the vast section of these unfortunate people.

In general the book is worth reading. Painstaking compilation of relevant data is evident through the pages. The theme is extremely sensitive and has always divided people. It goes to the credit of the

author that he has succeeded in maintaining almost total emotional detachment through out. But, the author, with his simple, straight forward style of naration and running sequence of events, intermittantly intercepted by citations from sacred books, takes the reader almost imperceptibly into the intricacies of the historical details. Needless to say that the book makes pleasant reading.

The young scholar has, however, proceeded without any hypothesis. The data presented is pregnant with certain very significant conclusions which he has unfortunately avoided. In the Weberian tradition, the scholar seems to cherish the notion of the independence of socio-cultural phenomena. He no doubt cites quotations hinting Marxian conception of base-superstructure relationship but has left this scientific tool of analysis unused. Citation from K.K. Ashraf, for instance, definitely provided a clue for the explanation of the flourishing slavery under the Muslim rulers. Author has simply bypassed it (p. 103). Elsewhere, the dialogue between Nanasaheb and Pant Pratinidhi after the death of Chhatrapati Shahu in 1749, hints at the socio-political (basically economic) roots of this obnoxious tradition—untouchability. But the author has carefully avoided to touch naturally overflowing conclusions. In the absence of any logical analysis and meaningful conclusions the work appears to be an exercise in traditional historiography wherein the reader is dumb-struck by a senseless heap of facts and figures. Appropriate hypothesis and deeper analysis would have saved the work from resembling merry excursion in to the past. Despite such glaring weaknesses, the book definitely is a valuable edition.

J. R. Shinde,  
Dept. of Political Science, Marathwada University,  
Aurangabad, Maharashtra

## BOOK REVIEW

### *In The Battle For Liberation*

Major Jaipal Singh, *In the battle for Liberation: Memoirs*, National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 144, Rs. 20 Pbk

The official historiography of the Indian national movement has tended to give undue prominence to Congress leadership for its success. Those who did not follow the official Congress line are conveniently ignored, or relegated to the background, or even discredited as saboteurs. It should be clearly recognised that it was a struggle for liberation from internal and external oppression waged by masses with their numerous lesser known or unknown heroes. A part of the unwritten chapter of liberation struggle is narrated through these memoirs by one of the leaders who played a key role in the political awakening of the Indian armed forces and consolidation of anti-imperialist organisation in the colonial army. He was an eye-witness to the brutalities of the British imperialism and treacheries of the Congress leadership. This autobiographical sketch of Major Jaipal Singh shall be an illuminating source of inspiration to young people still engaged in uncompromising battle for human emancipation from oppression and social injustice.

Major Jaipal Singh was a nationalist first and a radical later, according to his own confession. When he deserted the army, he did so simply under the deep patriotic impulse. When he came out from the underground life after the achievement of so-called 'independence' he was detained by the Congress regime at Fort William for a year without trial till he jumped out and went underground again for nearly a decade. The story mainly revolves around the years of barrack and underground. The prevailing poverty and exploitation in the countryside left a deep imprint upon his young sensitive mind and strengthened his resolve to overcome it. The village life had taught him to hate imperialists, the university life had taught him to hate the upper classes. Gandhism repelled him as a political ideology, and he was deeply influenced by revolutionary terrorism though he did not quite like the idea of individual terrorism and desired collective action.

He decided to join armed forces to shake the British rule from within. The Second World War brought in a large number of fresh recruits including emergency Commissioned Officers, who unlike senior servile Indian officers of aristocratic make, were hostile to the British

rule, and sharply reacted to insults and humiliation. Major Jaipal Singh explains how they evolved an organisational net work, knowing too well that collective bargaining would be considered an act of mutiny which could bring them death penalty. It is surprising that neither Congress nor left parties paid attention to mobilise dissatisfaction among British armed forces, and bring them within the organisational fold which could have delivered a death blow to the British rule in India in the quickest time. Through these memoirs, Major Jaipal Singh tells us how without any outside help from leading organised political parties, they proceeded to evolve revolutionary organisation among themselves. He also throws light on wide-spread anti-British revolt of Indian drivers during the war in Libya. In Lahore, Major Jaipal Singh came in contact with Communists. He was a witness to brutal dehumanising effects of the war in Assam in the shape of rape and murder of civilians, death penalty to the INA soldiers taken as prisoners of War by the British. He also saw Burmese villages and towns turned into graveyards.

At the end of the war, nobody knew it more than these army men that imperialism had weakened and its foundation shaken beyond repair and people were in a militant mood. The revolutionary energy of the people was converted into communal frenzy. This was due to a grave betrayal of Indian people by Congress which failed to launch anti-imperialist struggle at the end of the War. When Communist Party published and circulated the Operation Asylum exposing the attempts of British imperialism to subvert the national movement, interim Government headed by Congress, raided and searched their party offices all over the country. During early years of underground life, Major Jaipal Singh tasted bitter disillusionment with empty revolutionary phrase mongering of the Socialist Party. After a year of unjust detention by the Congress regime, Major Jaipal Singh escaped to freedom to join the Telengana peasant struggle. Here he saw Nehru's democracy in operation, no way different from Nazi rule. Peasantry fought heroically in the face of police brutalities and unaccountable agony and suffering. He describes how under blood and smoke a new peasantry was being shaped, no more servile to the oppressors, but strong and upright with determination to overthrow age-old exploitation. The police engaged in indiscriminate arson, loot, rape, and murder, and let loose a reign of terror. The peasantry bore all this with exemplary heroism.

These memoirs are incomplete and stop at Telengana. Yet they throw invaluable light on the experiences during those stormy years. Major Jaipal Singh's immense sacrifice will remain a constant source of inspiration for people engaged in the battle for liberation.

Brahma Nand,  
Dept. of History, A.R.S.D. College,  
Dhaura Kuan, Delhi University, New Delhi

# **Centenary Celebration of May Day**

*Against Communalism and Secessionism*

*And to hold aloft Trade Unionism and  
Democratic Rights*

*To obtain the Constitutional Recognition of  
The Right to Work and to fight against  
Unemployment*

*In the struggle for elevating quality the  
life and living*

*Workers of the World, Unite.*

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century Z.U. Malik	3
Traditional Crafts and Occupational Structure of the Assamese Rural Society in the 19th Century Nandita Khadria	36
Reemergence of Land Leasing in Kerala: The Case of Kuttanad K.K. Eswaran	64
Integration of Lambadas as Gangmen on the Railways in Andhra Pradesh B.R. Shyamala Devi	81
DISCUSSION Declining Food Production per Head: A Pervasive Problem of Developing Economies Utsa Patnaik	102
BOOK REVIEWS	109

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 18

NUMBERS 11-12

NOV.-DEC. 1990

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland	
Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250
(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)	

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R.Krishnan  
D.Raghunandan  
C.Rajamohan  
C.P.Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

## NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted to *Social Scientist* should not be under consideration by any other publication. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate, typewritten on one side only, and double-spaced throughout. Footnotes, including comments and references, should be indicated consecutively through the article by raised numerals corresponding to the list of notes placed at the end. They should provide the author's forename and/or initials, title of publication, publisher, place of publication and date of publication. The styles to be adopted for books and journal articles is indicated below:

1. A. Eckstein, China's Economic Relations, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
2. See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', Journal of Comparative Economics, December 1979, pp. 325-45.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

**Erratum** Makarand Paranjape, author of the article, 'Ideology as Form' which appeared in *Social Scientist* 207-8, teaches at the Department of English, University of Hyderabad.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
15/15, Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.



## Editorial

Was the internal weakening of the Mughal empire and its gradual dissolution a prelude to colonial rule and therefore a determinant of the nature and extent of its impact in India? Or was India's 18th century experience a mere continuation of a process of commercialisation resulting from international integration that had begun during the 17th century, reflected in a process of decline in certain regions and dynamism in others? This issue of *Social Scientist* leads with Z.U. Malik's Presidential Address to the Medieval Section of the Indian History Congress, which examines the evidence relating to this debate. His conclusion is that the process of disintegration was not merely real but also largely internally generated, rendering arguments about continuity in development over the 18th and 19th centuries suspect.

The organisational basis of agriculture, the occupational structure of the rural workforce and their interrelation are issues central to all discussions on the nature of economic transformation in less developed economies. Here, we put together three case studies, contemporary and historical, analysing these questions in diverse regions of the country.

K.K. Eswaran examines the interesting instance of 'retrogression' to informal land leasing, in the wake of successful land reforms, in the predominantly paddy-cultivating Kuttanad region of Kerala. This was an area where the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 was successfully implemented, ceilings prescribed, tenancy abolished and ownership rights on leased-in land and land held by landless hutment dwellers conferred on tenants and landholders. However, given the amount of surplus land transferred and the fact that the erstwhile tenants were mostly upper-caste Hindus and Syrian Christians, a large portion of agricultural labourers belonging to the Pulaya and other depressed communities remained landless in the post-Reform period as well. This factor assumed significance when the economics of paddy cultivation worsened in the post-Reform period, with input prices and wage rates rising much faster than final product prices. The erstwhile tenants-turned-land owners faced up to the situation by diversifying their income sources, so that the dominant share of family income came from non-agricultural sources, particularly salaried employment. The consequent decline in cropping and labour use intensity (while population increased) in agriculture affected adversely the number of days of employment per head available to agricultural labourers from the socially depressed communities, especially since not many avenues for sustainable non-agricultural employment were open to them. The combination of inadequate returns to investment in cultivation and severe underemployment has resulted in a retrogression to informal land

leasing, as agricultural labourers in search of a more certain income stream are willing to undertake cultivation on a fixed cash rent basis, as land offers meagre returns above the imputed cost of labour.

The question of the diversification of rural economic activity is taken up in other contexts in the papers by Nandita Khadria and Shyamala Devi. Examining trends in the occupational structure of Assamese rural activity in the 19th century, Khadria focuses on: the decline during the colonial period of a wide range of artisanal and household industries that existed under the earlier Ahom administration; and the fact that the tea plantations which were encouraged under colonial rule could not attract Assamese labour, despite the decline of the crafts and lack of any significant commercialisation during this period. Many factors account for this lack of diversification. To start with, there was no noticeable participation in commerce linked to the crafts under the Ahom administration, when the artisanal sector primarily catered, on the basis of revenue paid in personal services, to the consumption needs of the royalty and nobility. The consequent backwardness of technology in these sectors was not corrected under colonial rule, when imperial interest and the need for returns on investment were the governing motivations. This made it impossible, despite the transportation cost advantage, for many non-agricultural, artisanal sectors to survive competition from factory-produced goods from Britain. The principal exception to this were the tea plantations, which were not merely fostered by the British, but supported, when faced with labour shortages, with policies aimed at channelising labour to the tea gardens. However, what is remarkable is that despite these policies and the decline of employment opportunities in the crafts, the plantations, which relied on labour from Chhota Nagpur, Ghazipur, Benaras and Bihar, could not attract adequate Assamese labour. This, according to Khadria, was essentially because earnings in agriculture, though far from spectacular, were attractive when compared with the wages and poor working conditions in the plantations. As a result, the decline of the artisanal industries in the 19th century resulted in a rise in employment shares in agriculture rather than elsewhere.

Shyamala Devi's examination of the integration of the Lambada population of Poosala Thanda as gangmen in the railways suggests that, when offered a break from the uncertainties associated with casual agricultural labour or low productivity cultivation, in the form of regular employment at relatively high wages and benefits, the tribals are willing to sell their land or take on high interest loans, to pay the 'price' for such employment. Although this does not snap all links with agriculture, it has resulted in substantial social changes in the Lambada community. These regional variations in the influences acting to determine occupational structure render far more complex the character of the development process in India.

Z.U..MALIK\*

*The Core and the Periphery: A Contribution to the Debate on the Eighteenth Century\*\**

There is a general unanimity among modern historians on seeing the dissolution of Mughal empire as a notable phenomenon of the eighteenth century. The discord of views relates to the classification and explanation of historical processes behind it, and also to the interpretation and articulation of its impact on political and socio-economic conditions of the country. Most historians sought to explain the imperial crisis from the angle of medieval society in general, relating it to the character and quality of people, and the roles of the diverse classes. They have laid emphasis on the inquiry into deeper causes of the decreasing social surplus for distribution amongst the governing classes leading to ethnic and regional frictions among them. They have further stressed the need to explore the historical factors responsible for a steady deterioration in the economic condition of actual producers, the changing patterns of relationship between *zamindars* and political authorities, and failure of government in maintaining direct contacts with small landowners and resident (*khud-kasht*) cultivators. The researches made in this direction though reflecting divergent formulations have in effect rendered obsolete the perspective of historiography of Medieval India from the conventional paradigms of chronological narrative of events moving in recurrent cycles around royalty, nobility, wars and revolts, and called for a thorough investigation and objective analysis of all possible dimensions of the socio-economic forces. A good many comprehensive monographical studies as well as miscellaneous publications in the form of articles and seminar papers have appeared on socio-economic themes of Indian history during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much work in this field, I am happy to say, has been done at the Department of History at Aligarh.

Latterly, scholarly attention has been attracted towards a portra-

---

\* Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

\*\* Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, Indian History Congress, Calcutta, 1990.

yal of eighteenth-century in its own distinctive image independently of the phenomenon of Mughal decline, and to see it as a consequence of a continuing process of economic growth in seventeenth century.

According to this thesis the disintegration of Mughal empire did not produce destabilising effects on the country's trade and commerce, its markets, towns and monetary system; but on the contrary generated forces of regeneration and growth throughout India. Through distribution of urban economies and collaboration of Indian merchants, bankers and traders with the East India Company the agricultural and industrial production was further stimulated. The continuity in the economic development was thus maintained without being interrupted by the establishment of British imperial power in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Frank Perlin, in his laboriously researched monograph,<sup>2</sup> has viewed the problem of India's pre-colonial past in the context of international commercial capitalism of which, he claims, it had become an essential part even during the seventeenth century. Local merchant capitalism emerged independently in India as in Europe but 'within a common international theatre, and societal and commercial changes'.<sup>3</sup> He hastens to add: 'But by the eighteenth century the process of integration is of an altogether different scale and character'.<sup>4</sup> Another author has tried to discover elements of elements of continuity between seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the system of polity and governance. He states that under the Mughals no state had come into being or grown to the full stature of nation state so as to decay or wither away later. The Mughal state should not be seen as a consolidated territorial entity with geographically fixed boundaries, comprising within its limits a homogeneous community of people. One should not be overawed by anarchic conditions prevailing in eighteenth-century because such a state had always existed in the preceding one in which Mughal state expanded and thrived.<sup>5</sup> J.P. Marshall has attempted to identify features of change and continuity in most aspects of agrarian systems existing in the pre-colonial and post-British periods of eighteenth century Bengal. He concludes:

Thus there was an apparent continuity between the old Mughal regime and the new British one.<sup>6</sup>

But in this vision of eighteenth-century the centre is blank. No study has focussed on the position occupied by the actual tillers of the soil and producers of artisanal goods as crucial elements of the internal economic structure and activity. The questions how the agricultural and professional classes were materially benefited, and in what manner their living conditions were improved by the continuing productivity have not been dealt with on the basis of statistical data to complete the picture of general economic prosperity. Ifan Habib remarks that 'the primary method of surplus-extraction throughout India had come to be the levy of land revenue on behalf of or, in the name of, the

Sovereign Ruler.<sup>7</sup> After the colonial conquest of Bengal, he adds 'the source of the conquerors' profits, however, lay not in commerce, but in land revenue. Maximization of land revenue was necessary for the maximization of profits.'<sup>8</sup> Marshall also admits that 'taxation was the central preoccupation of early British rule,<sup>9</sup> but its magnitude, modes of assessment and collection and incidence are the chief characteristics that so sharply contrast with the nature of revenue management of former regime in Bengal. From a careful examination of contemporary source-material three major points of difference emerge on comparative basis which were not taken into consideration by Marshall: (1) Under the Nizamat (1717-1756) the holdings of defaulting *zamindars* were not put to auction for sale; these were brought under the direct control of government and afterwards restored to them on the pledge of regular payment of dues, (2) no Mughal governor of Bengal had introduced the system of revenue-farming on the scale indulged in by the East India Company; and (3) in judicial matters the principle of arbitration was preferred to resolve agrarian and fiscal disputes over endless and complicated litigation in courts of law. Moreover, the magnitude of revenue demand which had reached the highest pitch, from Rs. 64.51 lakhs in 1762-3 under the Nizamat, to Rs. 147.0 lakhs in 1765-6 (an increase of 20 per cent according to the estimate of Marshall) proved disastrous for the countryside. Large tracts of lands became desolate and the peasantry reduced to poverty, abandoned cultivation and deserted their villages. According to Tabatabai the artisans and other professional classes experienced great hardship due to dearth of work. 'They were fleeing from place to place in search of employment, many of them were starving and reduced to beggary'.<sup>10</sup> Tribute or Drain of Wealth that followed the famous Plunder of Plassey, of which over-taxation was a necessary facet, impoverished the country and retarded socio-economic progress during the latter part of eighteenth-century'.<sup>11</sup>

No historian of eighteenth-century seems to have asserted that the colonial power itself had created a political and military vacuum,<sup>12</sup> but it is a historical fact that it took advantage of the absence of a strong, centralized authority to step into it. Had the imperial power remained as predominant, politically and militarily, at the mid-eighteenth century as it had been in the previous century such a situation would not easily have arisen. It is also not correct that political decentralization went hand in hand in the distribution of power at the local level.<sup>13</sup> There is no historical evidence to determine the character and phases of this process which helped the formation of independent states in Hyderabad (1725) and Bengal (1740). These states sprang up in manifest consequence of the growing weakness of imperial government, which could not assert its writ in the face of military strength of their founders. The process was later accelerated by the diplomatic and military intervention of European powers. At the time of the rise of Maratha state under Chhatrapati Raja Shahu

in 1708 no increase in the density of economic life was really visible,<sup>14</sup> it was constantly faced with financial difficulties that could be overcome only after its gradual expansion in the next two decades.

It is in the context of these reflections on the issue of change and continuity in eighteenth-century Indian History that the present essay attempts to place a few suggestions for the consideration of scholars and specialists of this well-known theme. Without venturing to formulate a new theory in this respect I have tried to put the record of events straight with some historical cognition.

## I

The Mughal state was monarchical in character and highly centralised in organizational form. It possessed a land mass which was bounded by fairly well defined frontiers, and governed by an elaborate, highly unified and systematized bureaucratic machinery under the exclusive control of its sovereign. The imperial dominions were divided and sub-divided into provinces, *sarkars* and *parganas* by precisely defined limits, largely determined by geographical, strategical, and administrative factors. The main structure of the mass of land once shaped and designed on firm lines in 1581 remained practically unchanged till the mid-eighteenth century, though the limits of subdivisions were naturally revised from time to time in several provinces, indicating the effective character of the Mughal administrative system. Within the settled areas marked out by protected frontier lines the writ of the Mughal emperor alone prevailed, and the claims of no other potentate to suzerainty were recognized. The land-tax and other miscellaneous taxes were remitted only to the imperial exchequer and to no other agency unconnected with the government.<sup>15</sup>

The comprehensive statistical accounts of the district boundaries of the fifteen subahs, their divisions and subdivisions, with measured area and revenue figures, land-routes, crops, minerals, mints and manufactures as set forth in the *A'in-i Akbari* bear an illuminating testimony to the fact that Mughal empire was a political and historical reality, possessing all the characteristics of a sovereign unitary state. Its varied information supplemented with rich data from numerous sources has been presented, laboriously and skilfully, by Irfan Habib on maps in his *Atlas*, covering the classical period of the empire, 1556-1707.<sup>16</sup> Not only the territorial limits of the empire and fixed and definite boundary lines of *parganas* have been accurately ascertained, but each place has been identified, its local areas determined and revenue figures verified. The study of this monumental work establishes beyond doubt the existence of the Mughal empire and the effectiveness of its central government operating through several levels of provincial administration down to the villages.

The sanctity of boundaries separating the territorial limits of adjacent states in medieval India was recognized, and there was a definite concept of treaties formed for mutual needs and interests. There existed a set of principles and methods to govern relations between states, the violation of which signalled the commencement of war leading to seizure of territory by the victor. The two states of Gujarat and Bihar before their annexation to the Mughal empire, enjoyed an independent status which Akbar did not challenge until he decided to conquer them by force of arms.<sup>17</sup> The concept of *terra nullius*, that is, 'territory which immediately before acquisition belonged to no state' became popular in the age of colonialism when European imperialists believed that no European societies (African and Asian) did not make up a state and could justifiably be occupied by them. It had been asserted that in countries outside Europe there existed only zonal boundaries indicating spheres of influence of tribal communities which always changed their position but were never permanently fixed.<sup>18</sup> However, this principle cannot clearly be applied to the Mughal state (and indeed, most Asian states) even when its constituent territories fell apart and assumed the form of autonomous principalities by the mid-eighteenth century. In theory the military defeat at Buxur in 1764 did not deprive the Mughal emperor of his legal title to paramountcy extended over the eastern provinces in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa as is evident from contents of the *farman* issued by Shah Alam (1760–1806) to the East India Company following the conclusion of the treaty of Allahabad in 1765.<sup>19</sup>

The acquisition of Diwani was a recognition by the Company government of the territorial sovereignty of the Mughal emperor and acceptance of precise limits of the land mass placed under its charge. The Governor-in-Council at Calcutta also did not raise any objection to the inclusion of Orissa in the Treaty, although most of it had been ceded in 1751 by Aliwardi Khan to the Marathas in lieu of *chauth* and remained under their sway till 1803. The British government took full one more decade, 1765–1775, to consolidate their territorial possessions before avowedly assuming sovereignty over them, and subjugate areas on the north-east where topographical setting was complex.<sup>20</sup> But at no time did it face any difficulty in identifying linear boundaries by reference to statistical data of the measured areas of the Mughal territory, its *sarkars* and *paraganas* or did it become involved in boundaries dispute with any adjoining power. No where in his long exhaustive Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal (1786) has James Grant expressed doubts with regard to the exactness of the old boundary lines of the Mughal territory or exercise of imperial jurisdiction over them in the past. He has discussed general physical features of the subha of Bengal, its measured area, its divisions and subdivisions, their revenue accounts, and nature of the

entire political and fiscal systems in historical perspective since 1582.<sup>21</sup>

This enormous historical evidence as contained in *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* and the *Fifth Report* establishes beyond doubt that the Mughal state had clearly delimited and settled boundaries, though absolute certainty about a state's frontier is not considered as essential ingredient of statehood. For many states in the modern world have long-standing boundary disputes with their neighbouring countries as they had in medieval times, in Asia and Europe alike.<sup>22</sup> The Mughal state had its own territory, and within its limits it exercised sovereign authority to the exclusion of any other state. It also had a population, bound to the ambit of uniform political and economic laws enforced by its strong and competent bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>23</sup> Further, foreign relations were handled solely by the Mughal monarchy, a prerogative of great political significance which no other power could claim or compete. It alone had a regular, sophisticated system of protocol for sending and receiving embassies to and from other powers and countries and it alone entered into alliances with foreign rulers.<sup>24</sup> It had the capacity to defend its frontiers against foreign aggression. It established stability and unity in the country, improved material bases for economic life of people, and created conditions for the advancement of intellectual and cultural activities of all sections of society. Thus, the Mughal state satisfied all the requirements of an integrated and centralized political entity, a sovereign state, during seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup>

Some modern sovereign states of Europe attained homogeneity—religious, racial and linguistic—at a terrible price in terms of human suffering and economic ruin,<sup>26</sup> seventeenth century India, on the other hand, prided itself on a historically evolved balanced system of religious co-existence. In Mughal India religious and linguistic homogeneity was neither cherished nor attempted; instead, a synthesis that combined the prominent traits of divergent religious systems and cultural traditions was sought. It may, however, be pointed out that religious or linguistic homogeneity is not an essential condition for a legitimate political organization or state because there are several sovereign states like Canada and Switzerland which do not come up to that rigid standard of statehood laid down by certain writers.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the Mughal empire was not the product of dynastic and marriage alliances with local or foreign powers which was the main feature of the Habsburg empire in Europe at the beginning of sixteenth century under Charles V. It was, on the other hand, built on military conquests won mostly against Muslim potentates in northern India, spread over a period of more than three decades, 1556–1592. The conquered territories were drawn into a compact dominion under an effective and instructive central government of the sovereign state. The matrimonial alliances with the Rajput ruling families did not by any



means furnish the basis of the political and constitutional structure of the empire which had been constructed by Akbar and his successors. Nor did these few states whose rulers had entered into alliances with Mughal government form the core of the empire comprising larger and far more revenue-yielding provinces.<sup>28</sup> These autonomous chiefs had been first systematically subdued by incessant military campaigns and compelled to acknowledge Mughal paramountcy before they were admitted as *mansabdars* and elevated to the status of nobility. They were at the same time subjected to a number of obligations which in some major respects situated their territories within the institutional framework of the empire.<sup>29</sup>

'State' and 'Nation' are not always conterminous, and 'nationality,' in the words of A. Cobban, cannot be the sole criterion of statehood. 'Nor the nation-state is the one and only model for a sound political community.'<sup>30</sup> Canada and Switzerland each comprise more than one nation where peoples of different historical origins and cultural traditions are united for collective security and common prosperity under one central government. The rise of nation-states in Europe during the sixteenth century was not yet the result of the growth of national consciousness and feelings of national unity that gave people in general the sense of belonging together. In fact, close political and cultural identification of the individual with his nationality took place only at the end of eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth centuries in western Europe.<sup>31</sup> Nationalism is thus a modern phenomenon, and obviously inapplicable to the political situation in India during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The absence of it does not imply, however, the non-existence of a centralized, sovereign state in India. This sovereign state maintained peace and order in society, and provided a code of laws and an official language, imparting unity and solidarity to the country and oneness to people in general. With the active participation of different communities and classes in the political, economic and cultural activities of the state, it gradually took the shape of an Indian state, shedding the dynastic form which the term 'Mughal' denoted. Non-interference in religious and social organizations, ancient institutions and laws, customs and traditions of any community in towns and villages was the *sine quo-non* of the state policy, that secured for it the willing cooperation of all.<sup>32</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar sums it all up when he writes:

The Mughal empire, established in 1556, had united much of the Indian continent under one sceptre, given it a uniform civilization whose conquering light had penetrated beyond the bounds of that empire, and on the whole promoted the general happiness of the people in a degree unapproached except in the mythical past. It broke the isolation of the provinces and the barrier between Indian and the outer world, and thus took the first step necessary for the

modernisation of India and the growth of an Indian nationality in some distant future.<sup>33</sup>

## II

The Mughal state demonstrated its exercise of sovereignty most conspicuously by exercising full administrative control over its territorial dominions. The imperial centre was the mainspring of power from where authority flowed to all branches of administrative machinery in a province. On the strength and efficiency of central government depended the dignity and majesty of the whole monarchical system, security and integrity of the country, and safety of life and property of people.<sup>34</sup> Apart from performing basic, normal functions the imperial government became a big recruiting centre to provide jobs to a large number of people, specially from northern India, in far-off places of its provinces.<sup>35</sup> After assumption of independent authority, the governors of Bengal and Deccan began to appoint their old adherents and local persons of their choice to high and low positions in the administrative set up. Only very few qualified men from north India managed to secure jobs in Hyderabad and Murshidabad. In Malwa and Gujarat the Maratha rulers replaced the Central employees by their own officers and servants and deprived *madad-i-ma'ash* and other rent free grantees of their holdings.<sup>36</sup> In Delhi, too, a defeated noble usually disbanded his soldiers on return from the battle-fields, while others could not pay salaries to their troopers on account of loss of income from *jagirs*.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, numerous soldiers, small *mansabdars*, subordinate officers in revenue and military departments, clerks and rent-free grantees lost their jobs in Malwa and Gujarat.<sup>38</sup> Even in Awadh Shuja'-ud Daulah had to remove from service thousands of soldiers and petty servants from service in the wake of his disastrous defeat at Buxur. When Raja Shitab Rai, deputy-governor of Bihar, appointed Saiyid Nurul Hasan Khan Bilgrami as superintendent (*sazwal*) of revenue-collection for the whole *sarkar* of Shahabad in 1767 'carvans after carvans of the dismissed soldiers began to pour every day into Arrah, its headquarters, in search of employment'.<sup>39</sup> It was in this context that Ghulam Husain Tabatabai praised Lord Clive for maintaining revenue-free assignees in possession of their lands in Bihar. He wrote:

Otherwise, it would have been difficult to every one of them to live for a single day in these regions, nay, at any place under the sky in the whole of Hindustan.<sup>40</sup>

The empathy for a predominant centre that prevailed among large sections of people found expression in the contemporary historical writings in northern India. These historians represented the economic interests of urban middle classes, sharing with them a common resentment over growing unemployment, non-payment of salaries and

rise of prices,<sup>41</sup> and a common desire to see the state machinery operating more vigorously to restore society to a settled state. Through their entire narrative of the current situation there runs a thread of gloom which is in sharp contrast to the optimism, loftiness of tone, and stateliness of language that characterised the historical and poetical works of seventeenth century. The contrast obviously emphasises a marked difference between the two given social settings, one filled with prosperity, peace and confidence, the other with despair, anguish and want. The critics of centralist bias in the approach of these writers have not so far uncovered any new set of evidence to enrich our knowledge of economic conditions of people of different social categories in Panjab, Delhi and Agra during this period of political turmoil, 1740–1770. No attempt at deeper analysis of economic situation prevailing in different parts of empire has been made to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why such large classes of people were suffering economically if forces of production progressed at the same level of growth as was witnessed in the previous century. The Maratha documents pertaining only to the latter half of eighteenth century with a gap of ten years, 1761–1772, are primarily concerned with politics, diplomacy and war. These hardly throw any light on the living conditions of people in towns and villages of Panjab, Delhi and Agra provinces, and their reactions to periodic depredations by Maratha, Sikh, Afghan, Jat, and other war-bands.

If a strong centre previously guaranteed undisputed imperial sway over territorial units of the empire, its growing weakness both in terms of military potential and financial stability, was bound to disrupt lines of commerce and afford opportunities to local potentates to expand their power. Most of the evils that afflicted the Mughal empire at mid-eighteenth century proceeded from decadence in the internal working of administrative institutions of central government. Disintegration of empire was not the cause but the consequence of decline in the governing apparatus of the imperial centre. The first symptoms of weakness were discernible in its inability to despatch a well-organised army under some capable commander to suppress the revolt of Nizamul Mulk in 1724. The governors of Gujarat, encouraged by his example, flouted the imperial orders and extended the range of their executive powers.<sup>42</sup> The only punishment which the emperor could inflict on a disloyal governor was his dismissal, but the burden of expelling him from the province now lay with the noble appointed to replace him. Again, it was the tottering imperial centre that prompted Ali Wardi Khan, deputy-governor of Bihar, to forcibly seize the reins of government in Bengal in 1740, when the Mughal government had scarcely recovered from the blows of Nadir Shah's invasion. He was aware that in view of destruction and dispersal of armed forces and plunder of royal treasures<sup>43</sup> the emperor would not be in a position to launch full-scale military operations against him. The loss of Bengal

was a major setback to the Mughal monarchy, but it was a result of debility and helplessness of the latter, and not the culmination of any self-evolving process of disintegration working independently of it in the province. Formerly, in the previous century rebellions by governors had been prevented by the monarchy, and never allowed to build up their dynastic rule in any part of empire to be institutionalized subsequently. Whatever 'cycles of growth and regeneration were initiated in Bengal'<sup>44</sup> during the next fifteen years, 1740-1756, these by no means improved the financial position of the imperial government at Delhi. Material prosperity in Bengal did not begin with the period of its cession from the centre but it existed long before, at least from the times of Murshid Quli Khan, 1717-1727.<sup>45</sup> Ali Wardi Khan worked on the economic structure he had inherited from his predecessors, and that sustained him without his inaugurating any reforms for the expansions of agriculture and artisanal production.<sup>46</sup> Now, as the branches of a tree, cut off from its trunk, grew and spread out, these were soon swept by the sea-storm.

Nevertheless, the example of Bengal cannot be applied to other provinces of the empire where economic development was hampered by continual warfare and pillage. The provinces of Gujarat, Malwa, Rajasthan, Panjab, Agra and parts of Delhi provinces, convulsed by internal disturbances, Maratha raids and foreign invasions presented a spectacle of political anarchy and economic chaos. The breakdown of central power in Gujarat and Malwa aroused hopes of ambitious persons to establish independent principalities wherever circumstances favoured them. No local leader of stature and vision, nor a strong and well-knit clan rose to form a nucleus in the foundation of political entity and erect protective ramparts against the perils of insecurity. The Marathas who trod on these plains as victorious masters also failed to supply such a political unifying central force necessary to ensure tranquillity.

Not all the founders of new states in Gujarat and Malwa belonged to 'Hindu gentry' nor as it established that their ancestors had ever participated 'in agrarian management and in politico-military state-building' which can be traced back to the previous century.<sup>47</sup> Their emergence was as sudden as their eclipse, a direct outcome of disorders and lawlessness unleashed by the collapse of imperial law-enforcement agencies in these two regions.<sup>48</sup> Some 'Hindu gentry' created by the Great Mughals in Malwa.<sup>49</sup> as well as other Hindu chiefs and landholders for long supported the imperial cause but they could not naturally with their meagre resources when unaided by the Emperor play a decisive role in the Mughal-Maratha struggle, 1730-1740.<sup>50</sup> The revolts (sedition, *fitna*) against the imperial government were first started by the Muslim governors—Haider Quli Khan and Hamid Khan of Gujarat Nizamul Mulk in the Deccan, and Ali Wardi Khan in Bengal. Raja Jai Singh did not cast off allegiance to the

Mughal emperor, but adroitly enlarged the area of his ancestral territory through the acquisitions of large and fertile *jagirs* as *tankhwa*, *ijarah* and in *'am* from the emperor and *mansabdars*. In the pursuit of his expansionist policy the Raja was, supported by Khan-i Dauran, the imperial *Mir Bakhshi*, his friend and ally, and other courtiers whose *jagirs* he managed.<sup>51</sup>

What lay at the foundations of the diminishing authority of the imperial centre was the mounting pressure of the upper strata of ruling classes and educated segments of general public on the state resources. The influential nobles and big officers contrived to obtain considerably vast and productive lands in assignments, while social groups of middle category strove to secure jobs in offices and revenue-free grants under various designations. Squeezed on two sides, the royal exchequer faced increasing deficits, which were aggravated by rapid political changes in the central structure of government, mismanagement of the process of production and revenue-collection, and malpractices in the system of assignment. The latter Mughals, for reasons of political expediency, strove to accommodate as many claimants as they could. Their policy of heedlessly awarding jobs and lands to a crowd of people, in total disregard of the acute scarcity of *paibaqi mahals*, caused a heavy strain on government treasury and perceptible decline in the prescribed procedural rules in respect of appointments and fixation of salaries.<sup>52</sup> In the words of a contemporary, '*mansabs* flowed like water; a stage came in the days of Muhammad Shah when *mansab* and title lost all value and no land was left to be given to any servant of the government.'<sup>53</sup> Tracing the origin of this financial crisis Shiv Das states:<sup>54</sup>

In view of the fact that before the war (battle of Hasanpur, 1719) there was excessive grant of *mansabs* as well as of the *tankhwa jagir*, which were formerly held by the princes, princesses and Sultans, but were later on granted to big nobles, high-ranking *mansabdars* and famous Rajas. Moreover, the services in the *subahs*, *mahals* and *Sair* lands had considerably increased, the income of the treasury had fallen, and the pay-bill (*talab*) of the imperial servants receiving their salary in cash had increased.

### III

The weakness of Mughal sovereignty marked by financial bankruptcy and breakdown of *mansabdari* system, threatened the empire from inside and exposed its north-west frontiers to external invasions. Contemporary writers apply the specific term *za'f-i sultanate* to indicate the decadence of sovereign authority as a potent factor for the emergence of centrifugal forces.<sup>55</sup> Ashub says specifically that 'on account of the weakness of sovereignty' (*ba-sahub-iza'f-isult anate*) the foundations of the empire were undermined.<sup>56</sup> This became all the more manifest when Muhammad Shah appointed Balaji Baji Rao the

deputy-governor of Malwa, in 1740,<sup>57</sup> and in the following year surrendered half of the total revenues of Gujarat including those of the cities of Ahmadabad and Cambay to Ranoji.<sup>58</sup> To Nadir Shah the strategic north-western province of Kabul had already been ceded in 1740.

Though Ahmad Shah came to the throne in 1748 after winning laurels of victory against the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Durrani, his accession was not celebrated by pomp and pageantry befitting the occasion. From the outset the capital witnessed daily mutinies and tumults by the starving soldiery, accompanied by the sale in open market of goods and articles brought from the royal *karkhanas*. The emperor could hardly raise Rs. 2 lakhs by selling his plate and jewellery to clear arrears of pay of 32 months to officers and subordinate servants of his own palace.<sup>59</sup> The capital was enveloped in a spell of depression.<sup>60</sup> The court historian begins the story of Ahmad Shah's reign (1748–1754) with a sad, dreary note on the exhaustion of public treasury and administrative chaos, exposing what the last decade of the previous regime had tried to disguise. If the capital had supposedly recovered from the blows of Nadir Shah's invasion, its recovery did not much help the deteriorating state of finances in the subsequent years. The sequel to the continuing financial crisis was a wholesale disbandment of imperial army, which necessarily disarmed the Empire. In 1752 the new emperor ceded the provinces of Multan and Lahore to Ahmad Shah Durrani without any armed resistance.<sup>61</sup> After that, the process of disintegration was rapid, and with the murder of Alamgir II in 1759 the central government ceased to play any role in shaping the destiny of north India.

Nevertheless, the political light, dim as it was, still radiated from the Mughal court at Delhi, and it remained the symbol of Indian political unity despite the presence of divergent and conflicting contesting forces—the Marathas, Afghans, Sikhs and Jats. Delhi was converted into a theatre for the play of claims and counter-claims to political legitimacy through *farmans* extorted or bought from the Delhi court. But no regional power succeeded in building up a political order under a new dynasty, unitary in purpose or in organization, and capable of rallying varied power groups around it. Their failure to organize unity against anarchic diversity is the crucial fact of history of this period, and may account for the prevalent 'restlessness',<sup>62</sup> that appeared everywhere in society, now separated from sovereign authority of the state. At last Shah Alam sought to impart unified direction to public affairs by collaboration with the Marathas. The appointment of Mahadaji Sindhia as *Wakil-i Mutlaq* or chief executive head of Delhi kingdom in November 1784 created conditions for a possible evolution of a quasi-federal structure based on two widely accepted principles—legitimacy of the Mughal crown and predominance of Marathas—that would have a controlling influence

over other powers in north India without affecting their autonomy. From a careful study of contemporary literature<sup>63</sup> it would seem that there was here a glimmering of the emergence of a heterogeneous governing class dominated by Marathas but subsuming the interests of all other social groups. The havoc wrought by Gulam Qadir undid it all in 1789.

#### IV

On the basis of a general statement of Shah Nawaz Khan written in 1782 it has been supposed that development of manufacturing industries in Delhi underwent growth and Delhi society for some time recovered its elan after the departure of Nadir Shah.<sup>64</sup> But this solitary, fragmentary piece of evidence is not supported by any eye-witness account in other reliable contemporary sources. For instance, Anand Ram Mukhlis has not referred in his literary and historical works to the restoration of the city's damaged buildings, streets and markets to their former state of grandeur. Nor did Murtaza Husain find Delhi so populous and thriving as on his first visit to it a few years before the calamity; of its former splendid condition he says :

At the time the population (*abadi*) and splendour (*raunaq*) of the city were great. The beauty and elegance of its buildings and multitude of people are beyond description. At evening time it was impossible for a man riding on horse to pass through Chandni Chauk (square) and Sa'dullah Chauk while a foot-passenger could hardly walk ten to twenty steps. The markets were full of numerous kinds of commodities.<sup>65</sup>

The report of Jivan Das, agent (*gumashta*) of Jagat Seth at Murshidabad, describes in detail the destruction of Delhi in the year 1753-54. It is a very lengthy despatch, and only relevant points are given here:

The plundering armies of the enemy (Marathas, Jats) first destroyed the settlements on the three sides of the city wall and swept away all the goods and effects including the timber from roofs and doors of houses. They then set the deserted houses to fire. Afterwards, they entered the city and ransacked the houses in the same manner. The locality of Wakilpura was completely ruined.<sup>66</sup>

Murtaza Hussain revisited Delhi in the company of Ali Quli Khan during the reign of Alamgir II (1754-1759) and found it in a most wretched condition.

The old city of Delhi was laid waste by Jawahar Singh Jat and the new (Shahjahanabad) by Ahmad Shah Durrani. The stately mansions were razed to the ground to dig up buried treasures and plunderers carried away huge amount of money. There was scarcity

of water, and many places appeared dry. At the royal fort corn was growing instead of flowers, and in streets and squares where crowds of people thronged previously only few persons could be seen herding cattle on pasture-grounds. Within the fort the Rohilla soldier of Najib-ud Daulah tied their horses. He saw everywhere heaps of straws and dung. In *bazar* Khanam and Khari Baouli conditions were somewhat better.<sup>67</sup>

The last visit of Murtaza Husain to Delhi took place in 1780-1, ten years after Shah Alam had occupied his fort-palace. He does not give his observations about economic and demographic conditions of the city, except briefly stating what regions of empire had passed under the sway of British and other Indian rulers. Though in all these states the name of Shah Alam was still recited in *khutba* and struck on coins, not a single *dam* from anywhere reached the king's treasury.<sup>68</sup> Important information concerning the districts west of Delhi is however furnished by Rahman Ali who came in 1797 on his journey to Afghanistan which he began from Sarai Badli, 6 *kos* from it. He states that a majority of inhabitants of this suburban town were immigrants from Lahore and Panjab, traders and contractors by profession, while the land-owners were Jats and Gujjars. The road ran through ruins on either side of mansions, tombs, gardens and canals which the nobles and rich men had constructed in the past. The land was even and plain, very fertile but uncultivated, most having been turned into pastures. Naraila, Kannur, Panipat, Khoranda, Karnal, and Azamgarh presented the same scene of wrecked houses, gardens, canals and fields. All these places were infested with thieves and robbers; and traders and travellers could not move on without armed guards.<sup>69</sup>

During this period the city of Agra also suffered in prosperity and population due to political disorders and changes in government. At the age of ten years Murtaza Husain had gone to Agra in the company of Sarbuland Khan before Nadir Shah's invasion and found it populous and flourishing. He observed:

On the two sides of river Jumna there were imposing and lavish residences and beautiful gardens, and in downtown embroidered cloth, brocade, gold and silver laces, a variety of cotton cloths, and rose perfumes were manufactured. All its localities were densely populated.<sup>70</sup>

When he revisited Agra in 1778, immediately after the expulsion of the Jats by Najaf Khan, he saw it in a desolated condition.<sup>71</sup>

The old buildings on the banks of Jumna and elsewhere in the city were falling, settlements in its suburbs were broken and deserted. From the Fort to Phul Hathi and Kinari Bazar there was some population, beyond it at many places the number of people had been reduced.



The decay of old buildings in Agra is attested by a French traveller, Counts of Madave, who visited it in 1775. He says:

There were a number of old palaces, ruined Carvan-sarais and other buildings, full of debirs. From the centre up to one *kos* one sees only the masonry, fallen palaces, columns and terracotta in prodigious quantity.<sup>72</sup>

The above evidence deduced from contemporary historical works to the exclusion of poetical writings is only intended to focus on the other aspects of the optimistic picture of material prosperity in the capital which Shah Nawaz Khan painted living in Hyderabad, far away from the scene. Though literary evidence comprising *shahr ashub*, satires and poems may not serve as direct source for history-writing of the period, and no modern historian has utilized it in this respect, the themes and events dealt with, nevertheless, correspond in substance with concrete facts of general political affairs and occurrences recorded by the chroniclers in their volumes. For instance, the full-length satire of Sauda on Shidi Faulad Khan, Kotwal of Delhi, relating to his entanglement in theft and robbery<sup>73</sup> is no figment of fanciful poetic imagination, but based on actual facts mentioned in the *Tarikh-i Alamgir Sani*.<sup>74</sup>

These poems reveal the deep anguish and anxiety their authors felt on the destruction of Delhi and disintegration of its traditional social order. These also reflect their awareness of the hardship and misery which all sections of the population at Delhi experienced in those troubled times. But the desolation was not confined to Delhi. The spoliation of towns in Panjab by the advancing armies of Nadir Shah evoked in Anand Ram Mukhils a similar reaction.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the sack of Ahmadabad city and ruin of its merchants, artisans and common folk produced identical feelings of sorrow in the mind of Ali Muhammad Khan, a sober and serious historian, who expressed them in the following words:

The whole universe (*alam*) is completely desolated and trampled by calamities.<sup>76</sup>

For these poets Delhi had been a symbol of peace and security, a centre of culture and they admired it as much as Hafiz Shirazi liked Ruknabad and Dante loved Florence.<sup>77</sup> It will be misleading to interpret their likening of the fall of Delhi with that of the whole universe or in the light of modern standards of critical analysis. We should instead try to understand the underlying meaning with a knowledge of the style and diction of Persian poetry. It merely indicates that Delhi which was their world fell into ruins, though it does not negate the existence of peaceful conditions in other parts of the country. For a number of poets, writer and scholars, including Sauda, Mir and Ashub, sought refuge in Kumbher, Farrukhabad and Lucknow,

and enjoyed the hospitality and patronage of their rulers. It is pertinent to note that none of these literary luminaries took the road of safety to Agra or any district and town in the whole province of Delhi, but proceeded to places which still (1757–1761) remained free from attacks of the Afghans and Marathas.<sup>78</sup> By the time logic of argument the fact that peace and economic advancement prevailed in Benaras and Awadh does not establish that Delhi and its suburbs were not devastated, and that the versified accounts of anarchy are only products of poetic imageries and hopeless pessimism, and should be rejected as a source of information. They were at least realists in their pessimism: Shah Alam till the end his life dreamt and prayed for the reconquest of lost provinces and regular remittances of tribute (*baj*) from them.<sup>79</sup>

The rise and fall of towns in other regions of northern India—Jat and Rohillah kingdoms—should be studied in the historical context of the ebb and flow in the fortunes of their rulers during the period from 1740 to 1775. A careful examination of historical records will show that the relative rise of commerce in one town or another after 1775 is not so striking as the decline of many old cities from affluence to impoverishment in the trade network selected for discussion by some modern historians. The towns alluded to as examples of flourishing trade had indeed long traditions of manufacturing specialised products, and being closely connected with central administration they enjoyed a measure of tranquility in the early eighteenth century that facilitated agricultural growth in their vicinity. It was the most fertile and productive zone inhabited by sturdy peasantry where ties between town, and country-side were close, and within whose bounds were concentrated *khalisa* and *jagir mahals*, invariably belonging to *wazirs* and other central ministers. Towns such as Ghazinagar, Anwala, Hapur, Muradabad and Najibabad rose into prominence as emporiums in mid-eighteenth century when trade connections with Malwa, Gujarat and Panjab were disrupted by Maratha and Sikh insurrections, while industry and commerce in Delhi and Agra were crippled by the blows of foreign and internal invaders. In consequence the newly emerged centres of inland trade were isolated from western and central parts of India and whatever trade and commerce developed these became localised in scope. This factor also played an important part in the decline of Surat besides several others, as has been stressed by Ashin Das Gupta,<sup>80</sup> forcing the East India Company to develop Calcutta and later Bombay into centres of their business. The same reason led Najib-ud Daulah who founded Najibabad in 1754 to find out a new trade-route, the Lall Dong Pass, Forester writes:

its (Najibabad's) situation would facilitate the commerce of Kashmir, which having been diverted from its former channels of Lahore and Delhi, by the inroads of Sicques, Marthas and Afghans,

took a course through mountains at the head of the Panjab, and was introduced into the Rohilla country through the Lall Dong Pass.<sup>81</sup>

But the prosperity of these new trading centres was short-lived, as they began to diminish steadily after 1775, when Shuja'-ud Daulah brought the entire region of Rohilkhand under his dominance.<sup>82</sup> The rulers of Awadh could not absorb the Rohilla captains and soldiers in their armies, nor did they protect the interests of traders, cultivators and artisans.<sup>83</sup> Specially, the lot of service classes became harder, and they continued to suffer severely till the beginning of nineteenth century. In Moradabad thousands of unemployed people surrounded British officers every day to explore avenues for jobs under the new dispensation.<sup>84</sup> Marathas in possession of Sikandra, Meerut and Saharanpur failed to provide minimal needs of protection and order, much less stimulating development of local arts and crafts.<sup>85</sup> The Jat Kingdom of Bharatpur founded and expanded by Badan Singh (d. 1756) continued to flourish till 1776, but with the fall of Dig and recapture of Agra by Najaf Khan, its other towns like Kumber and Ver also declined. The Jat chiefs and *zamindars* focussed their attention more on cultivation of varied crops than on production of luxury goods. They had to maintain and feed large armies, and at the same time for emergency fill with immense provisions the mud-fortresses built at short distances throughout their territories extending from Bharatpur to Aligarh and Agra.<sup>86</sup>

All this resulted in the restricted supply of agricultural products into urban sectors leading to scarcity and precipitate rise of prices. There are many examples of periodic breaks in the flow of foodgrain into Delhi through Ghazi-uddin Nagar and Shahdrah, the gateways to Delhi.<sup>87</sup> Though Marathas raids were no longer a factor of desolation in the last quarter of eighteenth century in this agricultural region and the surrounding country of Delhi, Sikh depredation now spilled over, from Karnal to the district of Hapur, Saharanpur, Chandausi and Garhmakteshwar, causing losses to commerce and industries and distress to townsmen.<sup>88</sup> In the absence of a strong central government during these years of recurring crises, 1775–1800, predatory bands of Mewatis, Gujjars and Jats, appeared everywhere to plunder trade carvans and cattle, and disturb the quietness of villages.<sup>89</sup> Thus, intermitten dislocation of trade and commerce with consequent depression and fluctuations in the movement of prices precluded stable economic growth. Extreme shortage of money in the treasury forced later Mughals, 1750–1759, to alienate districts after districts to Marathas and Afghans, to buy peace. Raghunath Rao in the course of expeditions into north India, 1757–58, could not collect sufficient contributions in cash from Jats, Afghans and other *zamindars*, and ultimately turned bankrupt with a heavy debt of Rs. 80 lakhs, besides the accumulation of arrears of pay to his troops.<sup>90</sup>

Towards the close of eighteenth century trade and commerce slumped but agriculture endured, and so the proto-crafts at the local level to which Murtaza Husain refers in his work.<sup>91</sup> It was in the second decade of nineteenth century that 'the East India Company set out energetically', writes Metcalf, 'to develop the commercial potential of its own territories', in the Ceded and Conquered provinces in north India. With the establishment of peace, the cultivation of cash crops like indigo, cotton and sugarcane recovered leading to commercial expansion in the central and northern Gangetic Doab.<sup>92</sup> But now the process of 19th century de-industrialization intervened to hamper urban growth and extension of commerce to spheres outside the Drain-mechanism.

The contention that enormous wealth and power of *zamindars* derived on the one hand from enhanced agricultural production and led on the other to an increase in the number and intensity of their risings against the Mughals is more based on speculative cognition than on any quantitative or even qualitative data. Analysis of historical facts will show that proliferation in the insurrections of refractory *zamindars* (*zortablāb*) was more due to the growing incapacity of government to contain them rather than to any exceptional argumentation of their material resources. The example of Jat insurgency at different chronological turns affords a good proof of this. In 1716 the imperial forces under the command of Raja Jai Singh defeated Churaman Jat and compelled him to sue for peace, but about the mid-eighteenth century his descendants (Badan Singh and Surajmal) carved out the independent principality of Bharatpur. Even a petty *chaudhri*, Ballujāt, and Kamgar Khan Balluch, *faujdar* of Panipat, built their own strong holds (1753–56) at Ballamgarh and Farrukhnagar respectively, adjacent to Delhi.<sup>93</sup> Where law-enforcement agencies were firm—as in Awadh and Bihar—the seditious *zamindars* did not rise and set up autonomous states, notwithstanding their perpetual disputes with the governors over the size of land-revenue. If sinews of war are taken as criteria of their aggrandizement, no sharp difference is noticeable in the nature and extent of the potential possessed by the *zamindars* of Baiswara,<sup>94</sup> Bundelkhand,<sup>95</sup> and Gujarat<sup>96</sup> in seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Enhancement of assessed revenue (*jama' dami*) by itself is not in any case a certain index of the development of agricultural productivity unless it is linked with statistics of the amount actually realized; as well as prices and wages. From modern studies on the subject it is quite unclear what part of social surplus now appropriated by local magnates was distributed to make the economic life more 'dense and vigorous' for improvement of conditions of the mass of the rural population.

The later Mughals could not undertake large buildings such as forts, palaces, mosques and mausoleums owing to the emptiness of their treasuries, though their nobles did build such small mosques, *sarais* and

lay out gardens as their varying tastes and means prompted them. Roshanud-Daulah constructed golden mosques and a Raja Jai Singh erected the famous observatory (Jantar Mantar) in Delhi. After the destruction of most of the thickly populated localities in Delhi during the decade, 1750–1760, no attempt was made by descendants of the fallen aristocracy to repair the demolished houses or construct new ones in their places. Even the imperial canal flowing from Karnal to Shahjanabad was allowed to silt and get dry, and for full fifty years, 1754–1804, no Mughal King, *wazir* or noble had surplus money to restore it to the original working condition. It was on 30 May 1820 that water began to flow into the canal again, giving occasion for general rejoicing among the citizens of Delhi. The broken system of irrigation through canals may account for the transformation of large tracts of agricultural lands into pasture grounds in the parganas of eastern Doab—Hansi, Hisar, Sonapat, etc., forcing local people to change over from cultivation to cattle breeding and in some cases to brigandage. However, outside Delhi, the rulers of Awadh,<sup>97</sup> Rajput chieftains and Marathas constructed buildings and temples in the capital towns of their states, but these too showed a distinct decline in art, scale and even technique of architecture.<sup>98</sup>

## V

In the sphere of culture, the eighteenth century had some features of its own. While architecture as a distinctive feature of Indian civilization registered a marked decline, the arts of music and dance continued to develop during the eighteenth century. Literary and poetic genius of India too continued to find expression. The spirit of religious toleration inherited from the earlier epoch also grew space. In its previous efflorescence of the composite culture Hindus and Muslims had incorporated in its texture strands from both of their common value systems and beliefs. Religious co-existence was the mainspring of this culture, humanism and urbanity were its hallmarks. Though the leaven of composite culture did not penetrate widely in rural society, leaving its traditional social structure unaffected, it still proved a cohesive force in maintaining communal harmony in all quarters when the country passed through ordeals of incessant fighting and constant political changes. The Muslim ruling classes gradually lost political dominance to Marathas, Jats, Sikhs, and local groups at the local level, and by the end of the century no important independent territorial unit remained under their control. But elimination of authority did not result a flare-up of communal tensions or riots. The Marathas who had reached the zenith of power showed no disrespect to the Muslim places of worship,<sup>99</sup> nor did they plunder or oppress people on the basis of religion; indeed they kept a substantial percentage of Muslims in their armies and civil departments. The Muslims lived peacefully in Poona under the protection of successive Peshwas who had granted rent-free

lands for the maintenance of their mosques and shrines.<sup>100</sup> This cordial relationship between two communities had not stemmed from 'equilibrium between power and religion' as it is generally assumed,<sup>101</sup> but from a sincere pre-formed integration of much of India's High Culture.

Here in India Islam remained as one among the many beliefs and cults without achieving predominance over any one of them. Unlike medieval Europe Indian society was not divided into believers and infidels but ethnically and regionally. The Persian chroniclers of eighteenth century sought to identify and classify major social and cultural groups on the basis of their common racial and ancestral origin and territory. Some of the categories into which societal divisions were perceived by them were Afghans, Mughals, Jats, Bundelas, Kashmiris and Deccanees. The terms Deccanees and Marathas were used interchangeably by the writers of north India. The terms 'Hindus' and 'Muslims', were rarely used and then only to indicate the bulk of population when affected by some calamity, like famine, loot, and massacre, price-rise and unemployment.<sup>102</sup> The term 'Mughal' did not represent any particular religious community or caste but a heterogeneous class comprising divergent racial and religious groups who were directly associated with the imperial administrative apparatus.<sup>103</sup> Sawai Jai Singh (a Rajput) was as much a Mughal in outlook and moorings as Khan-i Dauran (an Indian Muslim).

The spirit of enlightenment and rationalism which Akbar had sought to infuse among Persian knowing classes of Indians through translations of Sanskrit works on Hindu religion, philosophy and science<sup>104</sup> did not end with the close of his reign; and scholars went on producing translations of these texts under his successors. A sufficiently large number of extant copies of these works, gathered from different cities and towns<sup>105</sup> and catalogued in the famous collections of Persian manuscripts suggests that their circulation was not confined to princes or a select group of nobles but extended beyond it to wide circles in north India where Persian language had struck deep roots. The number of books on Hinduism, originally written or transcribed from old translations in eighteenth century is the largest, showing a revival of this important branch of Persian literature.

The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, being the most comprehensive and popular works on many aspects of Hinduism had first engaged the attention of Akbar for rendering them into Persian by a band of Muslim linguists.<sup>106</sup> These translations served as models for writers and poets, including a large number of Hindus who had acquired mastery of Persian to study and translate Sanskrit works with greater felicity of expression and simplicity of style in the succeeding centuries.<sup>107</sup> Muslim scholars and historians of eighteenth century, apart from compiling separate works on Hindu religion and philosophy,<sup>108</sup> devoted complete sections in their historical narratives to describe beliefs, practices,

sects and festivals of Hindus.<sup>109</sup> Indian literature written in Persian was thus made accessible to Persian-knowing people not only in Iran and Central Asia but also European countries long before its masterpieces were translated into English, German and French. The early British historians and Indologists like William Jones, Halhed, Holwell, and Dow utilized these Persian translations for composing their accounts of India and translating Hindu scriptures—Vedas and *Puranas*—into English.<sup>110</sup> This branch of knowledge, developed so assiduously and uninterruptedly in the Mughal age, played a significant part in harmonizing relations between two communities and in providing epistemological ground for Muslims of rational and eclectic outlook to question the polemics of fanatical theologians of their times. Their mental outlook and religious perceptions found expression in the superb poetry of Mirza Bedil, Shafiq, Sauda, Mir Hasan and Mir Taqi Mir who generally represented the continuity of cultural synthesis in eighteenth-century.<sup>111</sup>

In Mughal state the political and economic policies, and issues of war and peace were decided by the sovereign independently of any established church, which were implemented by a competent and loyal bureaucracy consisting of diverse religious communities and cultural groups of the country.

The Mughal court, in all its declining days, remained impervious to demands of the orthodoxy. At the royal court the arts of music and dance were patronised, within the palace the Hindu festivals of Diwali and Holi, and of Basant were celebrated by princes and princesses eagerly and enthusiastically. This pattern of court life presented a contrast to the grim bearings of puritanism characterising the times of Aurangzeb. The later Mughals realised the futility of sticking to the principles and policies that had failed in the past and would now illserve the general interests of empire. They adopted an attitude of reconciliation towards Rajput chiefs and *zamindars* in resolving the outstanding problems, and tried to maintain their distinct identity within the broad imperial matrix by conferring on them high ranks and superior positions.<sup>112</sup> At the Centre a large number of Hindus served as heads of revenue departments (*khalisa-wa-tan*) and acted secretaries to ministers or representatives of governors, while they had, by and large, the monopoly of subordinate and clerical jobs.<sup>113</sup> In 1720 Muhammad Shah finally abolished *Jaziyah* through a royal *farman*.<sup>114</sup> These measures signified a reversal of the policy of religious orthodoxy and rigidity of political postures under Aurangzeb. It would be wrong to attribute these concepts of tolerance to the weakness of empire for at the time the conciliatory measures were taken the Empire was yet compact and militarily strong.<sup>115</sup>

It is strange to find that when Mughal imperial power was dissolving and Marathas and other regional forces were establishing their autonomous principalities, a number of Hindu reformers and

saints sprang from lower orders of society to preach the gospel of unity of God, religious tolerance, peace and social harmony in different parts of northern India. Muhammad Shah was so deeply influenced by the piety, self-devotion and eclectic views of Swami Narayan Singh, founder of Shivanarayan order, that he became his disciple after the invasion of Nadir Shah.<sup>116</sup> Majnu Nanak Shah, a famous Sikh saint of Delhi, attracted a large following of Hindus and Muslims, especially the rich among them who offered costly gifts to him.<sup>117</sup> Pran Nath, a disciple of Deva Chandra, started a liberal and reformist movement, called *Pranami Samprodaya*, and wrote *Kulzum Sarup* in which he attempted to show that the ideals underlying the two religions were the same and there were marked similarities between the philosophies embodied in the *Qur'an* and the *Vedas*. The Muslims called him by the name of 'Ruhullah', and Raja Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand developed, under the influence of the saint, great regard for Islam and its Prophet in whose praise he recited two couplets every morning after taking bath. Pran Nath lived in Panna till the end of his life, and on his death he was buried and not cremated.<sup>118</sup> Muslim saints and theologians of the period studied Hindu religious literature extensively and responded positively to the basic tenets of the all-prevailing truth and universal brotherhood of men as set forth in it.<sup>119</sup> Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Jaman, a Naqshbandi Saint of Delhi, gave new intellectual orientation to the religious debates on the status of Hindus within the theoretical framework of Islam: He declared that the *Vedas* were Revealed Books, and Hindus, blessed by God with prophets, should not be identified with the *kafirs* of Arabia before Islam. Their faith in the oneness of God, ultimate end of the world and the Day of Resurrection approximated to the fundamental beliefs of Muslims.<sup>120</sup> The Chishti mystics also endeavoured to narrow the gulf between the two communities by spreading the ideals of love, tolerance and service to humanity. These rational and homogenizing factors of the socio-religious movements saved Indian society from the communal 'divide' when anarchy menaced its internal cohesion and strength.

The changing currents of political events did not affect the old institution of revenue-free grants of the earlier regimes for the purposes of worship and of education. The Marathas, Rajput chiefs, and Hindu *zamindars* continued to grant lands and sums of money to mosques, *madrasas* and shrines while the rulers of Awadh and Nizams of Bengal bestowed lands in endowment and stipends to Hindu temples, religious divines and recluses—*mahants* and *sanyasis*. This helped to create a general climate conducive to the promotion of religious concord and social-amity among classes and communities of Indian society. There are numerous documents pertaining to such grants which have already been brought to scholarly notice.<sup>121</sup> For instance, Muhammad Shah granted the village of Mustipur Taradih to Mahant Lal Gir, the fourth in succession from the founder of Bodh Gaya. The income from



the *zamindari* are amounted to several lakhs of rupees.<sup>122</sup> The Hindu *faqirs*, *sanyasis*, *vairagis* and holy recluses were not only financially assisted by Mughal government but their interests were also protected against any official excesses. When officers of escheat department (*Baitul Mal*) confiscated houses and goods of some *vairagis* and *Mahants* of a local Math after their death in Chakla Bareilly Muhammad Shah issued a *farman* to them to restore the properties of the deceased to the lawful heirs. The *farman* expressly stated.<sup>123</sup>

The present auspicious reign is the fountain and source of peace to all creatures of God. These *faqirs* are the holy recluses who are revered by Hindus and Muslims alike.

Najib-ud Daulah, the orthodox Rohilla *sardar*, built big houses at Hardwar for the convenience and comfort of the Hindu pilgrims.<sup>124</sup> Similarly the Rajas of Jodhpur, Bundela Chiefs, Raja Jai Singh of Amber, Chhatrapati Raja Shahu, Malhar Rao Holker and Mahadaji Sindhia assigned lands to the shrine of Ajmer and other shrines and mosques in the towns of Maharashtra, Malwa, Rajasthan and Agra.<sup>125</sup>

Hindu religious festivals and annual *urs* ceremonies at the famous shrines of Muslim saints gave opportunities to members of both communities to meet in a free and congenial atmosphere. The participation of Muslim kings, princes, nobles, governors and officers in the main Hindu festivals—Holi, Desserah and Diwali—is well known to students of Mughal India.<sup>126</sup> But this class formed a tiny minority compared with crowds of people drawn from middle and lower rungs of Muslim population in cities and towns who joined with Hindus in such social activities as music, dance and distribution of sweets associated with festivals. Mirza Qatil who has given a detailed account of the rich diversity of these colourful ceremonies states that barring few places in Rohilkhand, the Muslims took part in Holi festival and indulged in the sprinkling of colour without inhibitions throughout northern India. In Awadh they enjoyed music and Kathak dance arranged in the evening at Hindu houses on the Janamashtami. The rich and influential among them were respectfully treated and provided seats while the poor remained standing along with other Hindus of the same status.<sup>127</sup> They came out of the city in the company of Hindus to see Neelkanth during Desserah days, and their children carried clay images fastened on sticks of Taisu Rai on Diwali. Though Qatil is critical of some facets of Hindu festivals nowhere in his narrative does he refer to any incident of communal tension caused by them.

There are only four cases of communal commotion recorded in contemporary works in the whole span of one hundred years. Even to these the term 'riot' in our contemporary sense cannot be applied by any means, as none of them generated widespread frenzy or led to bloodshed and destruction of property. These quickly subsided on

government intervention or through negotiations between the contending parties. Two of them related to the issue of construction of temples on disputed areas, one in a village near Delhi by a Hindu *Jagirdar* in 1732–33,<sup>128</sup> and the other in Jaunpur by a Mahajan in 1776 in the days of Raja Chait Singh of Benares.<sup>129</sup> Hindus and Muslims had complete freedom to carry arms for self-defence, but they did not use them against each other when such troubles were stirred by a few mischievous individuals. The internal strife among them was primarily caused by conflicting economic interests and competitive politics rather than by internal communal feelings. The armies involved in fighting were comprised of heterogeneous elements drawn from all religious and racial entities. The Rajput princes kept in their service Muslim soldiers and generals who fought against other Rajputs as well as the Marathas and Jats. Likewise, the Nawabs of Awadh and Bengal employed a large number of Hindus in positions of power and trust in their armies and civil departments.<sup>130</sup> By the mid-century the number of Muslim soldiers in Maratha armies had increased to a great extent, and the *gardi* corps under Muslim captains like Muzaffar and Ibrahim formed an important element of their military organization. The army of Janoji Bhonsle of Nagpur included many Muslim *Gardi* officers who received more pay than the Hindu officers under his service.<sup>131</sup> Najib-ud Daulah and Suraj Mal fought fierce battles with armies composed of both Hindus and Muslims.<sup>132</sup> If in the words of G.S. Sardesai 'the Marathas take legitimate pride in crushing the Mughal power' and on that account 'can be very well called benefactors of India', the Muslim governors and nobles who invited them to 'conquer' may also be allowed to share in this kind of pride.<sup>133</sup>

The absence of religious or communal dimensions involved in the change of power is not established only by the absence of any assertion of a consciousness of Hindu ascendancy in the new emerging states, but by the more positive evidence of the cultural continuity to which we have already referred. The most outstanding example of such positive evidence comes from the acceleration in the spread of Persian language within India and the appearance of major Hindu contributions to Indo-Persian literature.

The eighteenth century was truly the culminating age of Indo-Persian historiography, lexicography, calligraphy, arts of epistolary and news-writing, biographies, glossaries, translations and administrative manuals. It was also the age of the ascendancy of Hindu scholars, writers and poets who left the imprint of their lasting contribution on all these varied fields of the Persian literature. They had their own schools in towns and cities to teach elementary as well as advanced courses in Persian to students of both communities. Maulvi Mufti Lutfullah was the pupil of Lala Chupni Lal, and Ja'far Ali Hasrat learnt Persian grammar and poetry from Rai Sarup Singh, a poet of some note.<sup>134</sup> Their mastery of the arts of literary composition

and accountancy opened for them avenues of employment in public and private revenue establishments, and the experience they gained in the course of service enable them to compile works on these subjects in Persian. In view of the enormous literature produced by Hindus it will be erroneous to designate the entire body of historical source-material of the period as 'Muslim sources'. As it is fallacious to equate the term 'Moghul' with 'Muslim'. Their vast and many-faceted contributions constitutes an important subject of separate and exhaustive study, which for reasons of space cannot be attempted in any detail.

Anand Ram Mukhlis, a native of Sodhra in district Sialkot was a learned and prolific writer who has left fourteen works on different topics, including a collection of letters and poems. Besides his valuable works on contemporary political events and social conditions *Bada'waqa'* and Chaminstan his most famous work is *Mirat-ul Istilah*, a dictionary of Persian terms, compiled in 1744-5, which occupies a very significant place in the corpus of eighteenth century Persian literature.<sup>135</sup> But it is the *Bahar-i Ajam* of Munshi Rai Tek Chand which gained greater fame as a comprehensive dictionary of Persian terms, idioms and words, based on quotations from a number of classical and contemporary sources being the first comprehensive Persian dictionary on historical principles. Tek Chand lived in Delhi, was a pupil of Siraj-ud-Din Arzu, and a friend of Mir Taqi Mir. He died in 1766.<sup>136</sup> Lachhmi Narayan Shafiq worked under Nizam-ul Mulk as *Peshkar* and *Sadr*, for nearly fifty years, and compiled several works on history and poetry. He was fourth in succession in his family which had loyally served the ancestors of Asaf Jah I in the Deccan. He wrote several books on the history of the Mughal *subas* of the Deccan, and gave detailed account of their revenue figures, measured areas, and topography of towns in his *Hadiquat-hai Hindustan*.<sup>137</sup> Har Charan Das the author of *Chahar Gulzar-i, Shuta'i*, was a native of Meerut where his ancestors had held the office of *chaudhri* and *qanungo*. He left Delhi in 1754, and settled in Faizabad under the patronage of Shuja-ud-Daulah, to whom he dedicated his work, dealing with the history of later Mughals and the Nawabs of Awadh.<sup>138</sup>

What then, is the picture of change emerging from our evidence of the initial decades of the eighteenth century? I cannot, of course, claim to have succeeded in delineating it in any adequate measure, but some of the conclusions may still be stated. First, the decline of the Empire was real since its administrative centralisation and density of control over its territory in the previous period were realities and not mere titular entities. Second, the sources of breakdown are not necessarily to be found exclusively in the growing strength of the Empire's enemies: the pressure generated within it, notably factional struggles for larger shares in resources which could not give in the same proportion as the cupidity or ambitions of the elements composing the ruling class tended to paralyse the Empire. Third, there seems no justification for the view

that such paralysis, and the disorderliness accompanying it contributed to the prosperity of the rural classes, and that it was this prosperity which led to the increasing military power of *zamindars* or gentry elements. The gentry's defiance of existing political authority stemmed not from any growth in the gentry's economic resources out of larger production, but from a perceptible collapse of Mughal authority. Fourth, the emergence of the new powers is not to be seen in terms of a religious divide. 'Hindu' power asserting itself and replacing the Muslim. I have tried to show that the culture of the time precluded consciousness of such categorisation among contemporaries, nor did the political change find a reflection in the alteration of the cultural milieu which should have necessarily come about had the political change possessed any fundamental religious dimensions. That is why far from there being any Hindu dissociation from Persian. This is the period of the greatest contribution from Hindu scholars to Persian language and literature. Finally, I have failed to find any major elements of continuity between the economic regimes of the Mughal Empire and the British Raj. The perception of an underground process of growth, continuing alike under the Empire, the Anarchy and the Drain, totally eludes me, how much comfortable a view it might otherwise appear to us.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazzars*, 1983, pp. 12, 14, 25-26, 36-37, 68-70.
2. Frank Perlin, 'Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Colonial South Asia', *Past and Present*, February, 1983, pp. 30, 32.
3. *Past and Present*, op.cit., p. 81.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
5. Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, 1986, pp. 34, 38, 41, 158.
6. J.P. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India*, 1987, II-2, p. 135.
7. Irfan Habib, 'Colonization of the Indian Economy', 1757-1900, *Social Scientist*, p. 24.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
9. *The New Cambridge History of India*, op.cit. p. 140.
10. Gulam Husain Tabatabai, *Siyar-ul Mutakhkherin*, pp. 836-7; *Risala-i Zir'at*, Edinburgh University Lib. Ms. No. 144; *Persian Revenue Records of Bengal*, Add. 6586; John Murry *Collection of Revenue Documents of Bengal*, Add. 19504.
11. *Social Scientist*, op.cit. pp. 25-26; Irfan Habib, 'Studying a Colonial Economy without Perceiving Colonialism', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 3, 1985, pp. 355-381.
12. *Past and Present*, op.cit., p. 84.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
15. The *zamindari* rights of the three villages in Deh, Calcutta, Satunati and Govindpur—lying on the southern most frontier of the imperial *subah* of Bengal, were sold to the East India Company by Prince Azim-ush-Shan in 1698 on payment of Rs. 1,5000/- to their old landholders. These villages belonged to the *Jagir* of the Prince, at present governor of Bengal, and he was within his rights to transfer their management to whomsoever he liked. The Company was to pay a lump sum of Rs. 1,194-14-5 as the estimated revenue due from those villages to the imperial exchequer, which it continued to pay until 1557. Howel, appointed in 1725 by the Company as the Collector and Magistrate of the area, was responsible for the maintenance of law and order like any other *zamindar* in the empire. Likewise, he

- he could not act independently of the *subedar* of Bengali to whom he had to refer criminal cases of serious nature deserving capital punishment. This transaction clearly shows that the effective rule of the Mughal monarchy was not restricted just to the zonal areas but extended to all interior parts of every imperial dominion. For details: *The Fifth Report*, Vol. I, pp. LXVIII, LXXII, LXXXIV, LXXXIV, LXXII. For a discussion of *zamindar* rights based on original Persian records, Farhat Hasan, 'The English Acquisition of Calcutta', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Srinagar Session 1986.
16. Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 1982.
  17. For instance, when the rebel governor of Malwa, Abdullah Khan Uzbek, suffered a defeat and fled to the adjoining state of Gujarat in 1564 to seek asylum, Akbar did not cross the frontier to bring pressure to bear upon its ruler, Chengiz Khan, but merely contented himself by making a formal request to him to expel the vanquished fugitive. Likewise, the Mughal emperor avoided a showdown with Sulaiman Karani, the Afghan chief of Bihar for the expulsion of Sikandar Khan and other Uzbek rebels who after having been defeated in Awadh in 1567 had taken refuge in his state. For details : Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble, Munim Khan-i Khana, 1497-1575*, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 75-78, 89-90, 96, 111, 112, 118.
  18. Michael Akehurst, *A Modern Introduction to International Law*, London, 1984, pp. 142-43.
  19. C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanctions*, 1876, I, pp. 53-55.
  20. J.P. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II-2, 1987, pp. 93-94, 89-90.
  21. W.K. Firminger, *The Fifth Report*, II, pp. 173-75.
  22. For details, Surya P. Sharma, *International Boundary Disputes and International Law*, Bombay, 1976, pp. 16-23, 50-54, 66-69.
  23. M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*, Delhi, 1985, Introduction, Sir J.N. Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, Calcutta, 1952, pp. 228-229, P. Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 23, 58, 63.
  24. For details of performance of this obligation by Mughal state during the span from 1558 to 1750, Jagdish Naryan Sarkar, 'Asian Balance of Power', *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India*, edited by Dr. P.N. Joshi, Hyderabad, 1975, pp. 194-22, and for diplomatic relations between the Mughal Court and the Persian kings in the early eighteenth century, Z.U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, pp. 158-160.
  25. Michael Akehurst has laid down three conditions which a sovereign state should satisfy for purposes of legal recognition; viz. (1) territory, (2) population, and (3) a government capable of maintaining effective control over its territory. Unitary form is not necessary for a state as it can also be federal, *A Modern Introduction to International Law*, pp. 53-54.
  26. *The New Cambridge Modern History*, edited by G.R. Elton, Cambridge, 1958, Vol. pp. 301-302, 307-308, 440.
  27. *Land and Sovereignty in India*, p. 28.
  28. The states of Amber, Bikaner, Dungarpur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bhojpur, though strategically very important, were small and less productive than the big and rich provinces of Panjab, Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Gujarat, Malwa, Bihar and Bengal. 'In Hindustan proper, the tracts ruled by the Rajas and princely *zamindars* were usually to be found only behind mountains and forests.' 'In the great belt of the *zabti* provinces from Lahore to Bihar there is little sign of such chiefs except on the periphery.' Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 183-84.
  29. For a detailed discussion of these obligations as well as privileges of these autonomous chiefs, S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars under the Mughals', *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, edited by Robert Eric Frykenberg, 1969, pp. 9-24.
  30. A. Cobban, *National Self-determination*, pp. 6, 13-14; C.A. Macarthey, *National States and National Minorities* London, 1934, pp. 440-1, 84-89, 50-51. Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 9, 11-14.

31. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, Macmillan Paper-backs, New York, 1961, pp. 8, 188, 579-83; G.P. Gooch, *Studies in Modern History*, London, 1931, p. 217; J.H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism*, New York, 1926, p. 29.
32. Tara Chand, *Society and State in the Mughal Period*, Delhi. 1961, p. 4. Beni Prashad, *History of Jahangir*, pp. 79-91, 83 and 95.
33. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Calcutta, 1932 Vol. I, Foreword, p. 3.
34. Ibn-i-Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, 1936, pp. 93-99, 293, 206, 257, Anand Ram Mukhkis, *Mirat-ul Ishtilah*, Or, 1813, ff. 8, 29; *Zawabit-i Alamgiri*, Add. 1641, ff. 14, 31.
35. The Central Government appointed a large number of officers and subordinate servants in all the provinces. The appointments and postings of *faujdars*, *amils*, *amins*, *karoris*, *qunungos*, *sazawals*, and *tahwildars* of *mahals*, *fatadars* and *mushrifs* were made through the offices of *wizarat*. The appointments and postings of mansabdars in the provinces, as well as those of *bakhshi-waqa-i-nigar*, *daroghas* of branding and verification, *dagh-wa-tasiha* were made through the office of Mir Bakhshi. The provincial *sadrs* and *qazis* were appointed at the recommendations of the imperial *Sadr-us Sadur*. The following officers working in Sarkar Surat were appointed by the Centre. This list shows the complexity of administrative activities undertaken by the Centre at distant places, and refutes the theory that sovereignty of Mughal State was confined to certain places round its capital cities of Delhi and Agra, or its scope of functions was restricted to only tax-collection. The various officers included Artillery Commander, Grand Bakhshi, Chief Judge, Mir Saman, Post-Master, *Sadrs*, *qazis*, *bakhshis*, Reporters, *Muhtasib*, Superintendent of Imported Arab and Iraqi horses, Superintendent of cattle market, *Darogha* of Court, *amin* of the treasury, Superintendent of civil court, Public works, Mint, Salt, Customs, Charitable endowments, Jewellery and Fancy, Markets, Hospitals, *langer khana*s and corn markets. For details: Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, edited by Syed Nawab Ali, Baroda, 1927, Supplement, pp. 222-223.
36. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, Part II, pp. 141, 154, 164, 167; Raghbir Singh, *Malwa in Transition*, Agra, 1936, pp. 322-323, 327.
37. Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashub, *Tarikh-i Shahadat-i Farrukh Siyar wa Julus-i Muhammad Shah*, Rieu, III, 943, f. 105; Anonymous, *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, Or. 2005, f. 22.
38. In Gujarat Hamid Khan and Haider Quli Khan had expelled imperial servants from various departments, including the employees in the mint of Ahmadabad. They resumed the lands of *a'imma* who left the city and went to settle in other places. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, II, pp. 45, 64, 131, 140-141. At the time of his appointment as deputy governor of Malwa in 1741, Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao had agreed not to disturb the holders of *madadma'ash* lands and daily allowances, but in practice this condition of the royal *farman* was not fulfilled by his representatives in the province.
39. S. Sakhawat Ali Khan, *Ahwal Saiyid Nurul Hasan Khan Bilgrami*, Aligarh Ms. Not only these jobseekers came from his home-town of Belgram, but also from Delhi, Jaunpur, Benares and Allahabad, one Meer Ja'afar was sent by Shaikh M. Ali Hazeen from Benares, ff. 39-41.
40. Ghulam Husain Khan Tabatabai, *Siyar-ul Muta'akhkherin*, Calcutta, 1833, p. 775.
41. From 1713 to 1720 there was steep rise in the prices of grain and pulses not only in Delhi, but also in Deccan and Gujarat. For details, Qasim Aurangabadi, *Ahwal-ul Khawaqin*, Add. 26, 244. ff. 62, 181; Yahya Khan, *Tazikart-ul Muluk*, Ethe, 409, f. 122; *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II, p. 18; Shafi Warid, *Mirat-i Waridat*, Aligarh Ms. p. 570.
42. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II, pp. 59, 64, 67, 118-119, 129-130, 163, 219, 231.
43. Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Tazkirah*, Aligarh Ms., ff. 18, 30.
44. C.A. Bayly *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, p. 36.
45. For details of his land reforms and their effects on the royal exchequer, Abdul Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan and His Times*, Dacca, 1963, 77-87; Salimullah, *Tarikh-i Bengal*, Aligarh Ms. pp. 31, 36, 43, 50; *Persian Revenue Records of Bengal*, Add. 6586. f. 47.

46. *The Fifth Report*, Pt. II. pp. 216–217. Ali Wardi Khan enhanced his resources by imposing additional *abwabs* (unauthorised cesses), while reducing the annual remittances to Delhi from one crore to fifty lakhs of rupees. It appears that even this amount was further reduced after sometime. The author of *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi* has referred to these remittances during the period, 1748–1754, but the exact amount of tribute from Murshidabad is not recorded. Also, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II–2 p. 52.
47. *Land and Sovereignty in India*, p. 8.
48. For instance, Tegh Beg Khan (1733–1746), Sher Khan Babi (1750) Jawanmard Khan (1744–1753) and Dost Muhammad Khan who established their principalities at Surat, Junagadh, Radhanpur, and Bhopal respectively were not originally *zamindars* or high-ranking nobles. Even Mulla Muhammad Ali, a businessman, tried to construct a port at Atwa, a village on the Tapti river about three miles South of Surat, and expand it into an autonomous petty state. For details, Z.U. Malik, 'The Rise of Teg Beg Khan, First Nawab of Surat, 1733–1746', *Islamic Culture*, January 1972, pp. 53–62, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II, pp. 80, 107, 116.
49. *Malwa in Transition*, pp. 72–75, 118–122.
50. *Malwa in Transition*, pp. 16, 29.
51. *Tarikh-i Shahadat-i Farrukh Siyar wa Julus-i Muhammad Shah*, p. 179; *Shah Namah-i Deccan*, pp. 168, 170, 245; *Akhbarat* (Jaipur), Additional Nos. 2, 13, 16, 41, V.S. Bhatnagar, *Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh*, pp. 269.
52. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, Calcutta, 1874, Part II, pp. 575, 628–630, 769, 773, 774; Mirza Muhammad, *Ibrat Namah*, Patna Ms. ff. 32, 70; *Ahwal-ul Khawaqin*, f. 18.
53. 'Aitmad Ali Khan, *Mirat-ul Haqiq*, Bodleian Ms. Fraser Collection No. 124 ff (91–92). Mirza Muhammad, *Ibrat Namah*, f. 70.
54. Shiv Das, *Shah Namah Alunawwar-ul Kalam*, Rieu, I, Or, 26, f. 86b.
55. *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, f. 2; Murtaza Husain, *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, N.K. Press, Lucknow, 1879, p. 168. The author states that formerly *parganas* of Erach Konj, Jalun, Bhaydur, and Jhansi were included in the *khalisa* or privy purse. In the middle of Muhammad Shah's reign the Rajas of the adjoining area on account of the weakness of authority (*binabar za'f-i sultanate*) took possession of them. Then the Marathas (Deccanees) forcibly removed these Rajas and established their domain over the *mahals*.
56. *Tarikh-i Shahabadat-i Farrukh Siyarwa Julus-i Muhammad Shah*, f. 105b.
57. G.H. Khare, *Itihasik Persian Sahitya*, Poona, 1949, Nos. 18–20.
58. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II, pp. 220, 264, 273–74.
59. *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, ff. 20–21, 44, 52.
60. *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, ff. 25, 29.
61. *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi*, ff. 32–34.
62. Satish Chandra, *The 18th Century in India*, Calcutta, 1982, p. 12.
63. Prem Kishore Firaq, *Waq'a-i Shah Alam*, edited by Imtiaz Ali Khan Arshi, Rampur, 1949, pp. 42–43, 46, 54; *Roznamcha Shah Alam*, Ms. Khuda Baksh Library, Patna.
64. *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, Text, III, p. 474.
65. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, pp. 41–42.
66. Anonymous, *Majmu'a Khutut-ha, Ethe*, Vol. I, p. 1170, No. 2131, Letter No. 12.
67. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, p. 44.
68. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, pp. 137–138. Also see the author's dialogue with Jonathan Scot on the issue of population and prosperity of Indian cities, Lucknow and Ahmadabad in 1805, pp. 613–614.
69. Sharikh Rahman Ali, *Manzil-i Kabul*, Ms. Regional State Archives, Allahabad, No. 12842. The writer had been deputed by John Lumsden, British Resident at Lucknow, to survey political and military situation in Afghanistan whose ruler Shah Zaman threatened at that time to invade Panjab and Delhi.
70. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, p. 161.
71. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, p. 161. Compare this account of Agra with the observations of Mir Taqi Mir as recorded in his autobiography. He had revisited the city on 1761 and saw 'a scene of dreadful desolation', *Zikr-i Mir*, edited by Dr. Abdul Haq, Aurangabad.

72. A. Ray, 'Agra as described by a Frenchman in 1775', Paper presented at Agra Archaeological Society, March, 1985.
73. *Kulliyat-i Sauda*, edited by Imrat Lal Ishrat, Vol. I, Allahabad, 1971, pp. 279-282.
74. According to the court historian a section of government servants including Saiyids, Mughals and other gentry, thrown out of employment, started committing robbery in the city, and their two leaders Zahid Beg and Saleh Beg were arrested and punished by the orders of the *wazir*, Imadul Mulk. But on investigation it was discovered that the *kotwal* shared the spoils of theft through his two sons Atiqullah and Shidi Muhammad who were associated with these gangs. (*Tarikh-i Alamgir Sani*, pp. 290-291). Some more examples bearing on historical facts may be cited from this copious literature which closely approximate to the actual conditions and happenings described by historians contemporaneous with these poets and writers.
75. *Bada'i Waqa'i*, f. 8.
76. *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, I, p. 88.
77. Edward G. Brown, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge, 1928, Vol. III, pp. 291-292.
78. Mir Taqi Mir who left Delhi in 1757 for Kumbher explains the point at issue by contrasting the conditions of those two places. 'Delhi in those days was little better than a wilderness, which every six months was laid desolate afresh. Besides, a man cannot wander from place to place for ever. In the Jat country there was peace, under a prosperous ruler and we settled down there under the shadow of his protection', *Zikr-i Mir*, pp. 91-93; Ralph Russel and Khurshid ul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets*, 1986, p. 34.
79. Shah Alam Sani, *Nadrat-i Shahi*, 1779, edited by Imtiaz Ali Arshi, Rampur, 1944, pp. 40, 70, 166-67.
80. Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*, 1979, pp. 6-10.
81. George Forester, *Forester Travels*, London, 1798, Vol. I, p. 190.
82. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, pp. 138-141.
83. About the condition of district Bareilly Archibald Seton reported, 'The *raiya*s were in abject poverty and there existed a great scarcity of bullocks. Formerly the *paraganas* were in a prosperous state of cultivation, particularly in the production of sugarcane; at present, however, the surrounding scene exhibits nothing but long grass jungle'. Imtiaz Husain, *Land Revenue Policy in North India*, New Delhi, 1967, pp. 9-12.
84. *Waqat-i Abdul Qadir Khani*, Aligarh Ms, ff. 14, 16, 18. The author had to wait patiently, longingly for months together to obtain the job of *thanedar* at Rs. 30 per month. In his effort he was helped by Bishan Singh and Lala Mansa Ram of Patna, both employed in the Serishta Department.
85. *Tarikh-i Alamgir Sani*, pp. 51, 245.
86. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, II, pp. 305-309.
87. In 1754 prices of all sorts of grain (*ghallat*) shot up. The wheat was sold 11 *seers* and pulses 12 and 15 *seers* per rupee, *Tarikh-i Alamgir Sani*, p. 17. For three continuous years, 1781-1784, famine conditions prevailed, due to severe drought, in Lahore and districts of Doab, but in Delhi prices of grain remained stable and poor people did not suffer hardship. The season was that it was regularly brought into the markets of Delhi from Shahdrah, *Waqat-i Shah Alam*, pp. 42, 91. But in February 1793 prices of food grains rose because their supply from Gangetic Doab had stopped, *Roznamchah Shah 'Alam*, ff. 63-64.
88. *Tarikh Ahmad Shah*, ff. 89, 127, *Waqat-i Shah Alam*, pp. 50, 64, 127.
89. *Roznamchah Shah Alam*, March, 1795, ff. 57, 71; *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shah*, ff. 39, 50.
90. J. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, II, p. 112.
91. These crafts were consisted of embroidery in the cities of Delhi and Agra, wares, pottery, woodwork, textiles, iron implements, swords and matchlocks in Meerut, Saharanpur, Muradabad, Sambhal and Amroha, *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, pp. 138-141.
92. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords, and the British Raj*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 59-50; also Christopher Bayly, 'Delhi and Other Cities of North India during the Twilight', *Delhi Through the Ages*, edited by R.E. Frykenberg, Delhi, 1986, pp. 224-232.



93. *Tarikh-i Ahmad Sahi*, ff. 23, 38, 89; *Tarikh-i Alamgir Sani*, p. 131.
94. The resourceful and affluent zamindars of Baisawra were found well-entrenched in their small forts filled with provisions and atoms by Ra'd Andaz Khan, its *faujdar*, in 45 regnal year of Aurangzeb. The *faujdar* launched military operations with his trained armies and artillery and suppressed them. For details : Z.U. Malik, 'Problems of Faujdari Jurisdiction in Baiswara', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Chandigarh, 1973, pp. 211-215.
95. *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1878, p. 303.
96. In Gujarat the tribute paying zamindars (*peshkashi*) of Pundhar, Chhaya and Kutch used heavy guns against the army of Sarbuland Khan in 1725-26, *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, II, pp. 58, 93, 99.
97. Sa'adat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk, founder of Awadh state, was a simple, rough soldier who spent most of his life-time in fighting or attending the imperial court, and he could not have developed 'special fancy for masonry'. But his successors, secure and wealthy, like Asaf-ud-Daulah, 1775-95, raised many monuments in Lucknow. C. Bayly, 'Delhi and other cities of North India during twilight', *Delhi Through the Ages*, pp. 224-232.
98. Both Smith and Percy Brown have expressed poor opinion about the architectural beauty of these monuments. 'The tomb of Safdar Jang in Delhi which was a passable copy of the mausoleum of Humayun, is marred by wretched decoration in the interior. V.A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, 1930, p. 186; Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture, The Islamic Period*, pp. 120-121.
99. With the exception of sacrilege done to the shrine of Shaikh Nizamud-Din Aulya by Sadashiv Bhao Rao in 1760, against which Azad Bilrami complains, there is no other instance of demolishing any mosque or shrine by Marathas in the whole course of their expansion of power in northern India. *Khazana-i Amirah*, Kanpur, 1871, pp. 111, 112.
100. *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, p. 355.
101. Louis Dumont, 'Nationalism and Communalism', *Religion/Politics and History in India*, 1970, p. 97.
102. Kamraj, *Ibrat Nawab*, f. 41a.
103. Beni Prasad, *History of Jehangir*, pp. 75-76; Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, pp. XXXI, XXXII.
104. Some of the important Sanskrit works rendered into Persian in this period were: *Tarjuma-i Mahabharata* in 18 Parvas entitled Raznamach, 1584, *Ramayana of Valmiki*, 1584-1588, *Atharban*, *Sinhasanadvatrasati* styled as *Singhasan Battisi*, 1574-5, *Rata-tarangini*, *Lilavati*, *Katha Sarit Sangra*, and *Haribansa Purana Bhagwata-Purana*: For details, A' in-i Akbari, English tr., Vol. I, pp. 112, 679. Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, II, pp. 401-25.
105. Some of the towns from where these works were collected are: Lahore, Multan, Khushab, Siyalkot, Delhi, Moradabad, Sandila, Thanesar, Panipat, Benares, Sironj, Kashmir, Patna and Mathura.
106. They had learnt Sanskrit of their own accord before undertaking the translation work at the Emperor's commands. Besides Abdul Fazl, Faizi, and Abdul Qadir Badauni, others associated were: Mulla Shari, Naqib Khan, Tajuddin, Tahir bin 'Imad, Mulla Muhammad Sultan Thanessari. A' in-i Akbari, Blochmann, Vol. I, pp. 110-112, Vol. II, pp. 336-366; *Muntakhab-ul Tawarikh*, Vol. I, pp. 112-212.
107. As early as 1575 Debi Das at Benaras translated in Persian from Hindi the *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das, Or, 1249. Girdhari Bahadur composed in Persian verse *Ramayana* in 1626. Or, 1251. Shaikh Sa'dullah Masih Panipati translated this popular epic under the title of *Ram-u-Sita* in the reign of Jahangir, Ethe, No. 3044. A metrical translation of *Ramayana* entitled *Nargislan* was done by Chandraman Bedil in 1693. Habib Ganj Collection, Aligarh. Shamsuddin Faqir wrote, *Ramchandra* in Persian, Patna Library.
108. Mirza Fakhruddin Muhammad, *Thufat-ul-Hind*, early eighteenth century, dealing with Indian arts and sciences. The Ms. preserved in the Seminar Library, History Department is complete and most beautifully transcribed. It shows the author's erudition on Indian principles of orthography, prosody, rhyme, rhetorics, physiognomy, music, and Indo-Persian lexicon and terminology. Another interesting work is: M. Hasan Qatil, *Haft Tamasha*, 1793, but his account of Hindu religion, philosophy, customs and sects reflects no major advance in knowledge and

- thought over *Dabistan-i Mazahib* of Zulfiqar Uzzadastani Mau'bad on which it is apparently based. M. Qadir Khan Munshi, *Sharf-ul Mazahib*, Habib Ganj Collection, Aligarh.
109. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Mirat-i Aftab Numa*, Aligarh Ms., *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, op.cit.
  110. J.P. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 6-7, 14, 19, 211, 259, S.N. Mukerjee, Sir William Jones, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 38, 39, 40, 73, 78.
  111. With the flowering of Urdu literature numerous translations of *Ramayana* and *Bhagwad Gita* appeared in the language. There are at least one hundred translations of *Ramayana* and 26 of *Bhagwad Gita*, listed so far. 'Ata Khurshid, Ma'arif, Azamgadh April, 1990. *Nairang-i Khayal*, a Lahore based Urdu Journal had issued a special number on Lord Rama and *Ramayana*, October 1928, in which Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal had also contributed a poem in the praise of Lord Rama, p. 10. The editors of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vols. III, IV, Calcutta, 1956, have surprisingly omitted to refer to the valuable contribution made in Persian and Urdu languages to the study of ancient holy books.
  112. Raja Jai Singh, Abhay Singh, Chhabella Ram Nagar, Girdhar Bahadur, Bhawani Ram were appointed governors of Malwa, Agra, Allahabad and Awadh.
  113. Some of the famous officers were: Raja Gujjarmal, Raja Najmal, Raja Nagarmal, Raja Bhakatmal, Raja Jugal Kishore and Anand Ram Mukhlis.
  114. *Akhbarat*, Sitamau Collection, III. Part 5, dated 27 December 1720.
  115. The imperial armed forces proved successful in suppressing the revolts and disturbances of Raja Ajit Singh, Jats and Sikhs during the years, 1714-1718.
  116. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 206.
  117. Dargah Guli Khan, *Muraqqa '-i Delhi*, pp. 23.
  118. *Hadiqat-ul Aqalim*, 669; Bhagwan Swaroop Gupta, *Maharata Chhatrasal Bundela*, Agra, 1958, pp. 104, 107. Some other famous Hindu saints and reformers who founded new religious sects for the spiritual and moral uplift of the low and down trodden people were: Ram Charan, Bulaqi Ram, Aulechand, Balaram Hari, Dariya Shaeb and Garib Das. For details, K.K. Dutta, *Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1961, pp. 5-6.
  119. Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Rud-i Kawsir* p. 394.
  120. Na'imat-ullah Bahraichi, *Ma'mulat-i Mazhari*, p. 11; *Kalamat-i Taiyibat*, letter no. 14, pp. 25-27.
  121. B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, *The Mughal and the Jogis of Jakhar*; K.K. Dutta, *Some Firmans, Sanads and Parwanas, 1578-1802*; Bashiruddin Ahmad, *Faramin-i Salatin*, Delhi, 1926.
  122. *India Divided*, p. 30.
  123. *Jaipur Records*, Persian Collection, No. 36.
  124. *India Divided*, p. 35.
  125. *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, pp. 354-356.
  126. Rai Chataraman, *Chahar Gulshan*, f. 39; *Siyar-ul Mutakh-kherin*, II, pp. 821-822; *Diwan-i Taban*, pp. 267-268.
  127. Mirza Muhammad Hasan Qateel, *Haft Tamasha*, N.K. Press, 1878. The work was composed during the rule of Sa'dat Ali Khan of Awadh, 1798-1814, pp. 68-71, 74, 76, 82.
  128. *Tarikh-i Shahadat-i Farrukh Siyar wa Julus-i Muhammad Shah*, Vol. I, f. 135.
  129. Khairuddin, *Tuhfa-i Tazah*, Etke, 483, pp. 115-124.
  130. *Siyar-ul Mutakhkherin*, p. 833.
  131. Anonymous, *Tarikh Rajaha-i Nagpur*, Etke, 489, f. 101.
  132. K.A. Nizami, *Shah Wali-ullah Ke Siyasi Maktubat*, Letters, 7, 8, pp. 63-66.
  133. G.S. Sardesai, *The Main Currents of Marathas History*, pp. 28, 29. For instance, Hamid Khan, governor of Gujarat invited Kanthji Kadam Bande, Baqar Khan approached Raghuji Bhonsle to invade Bengal, Safdar Jung took Malhar Rao to Farrukhabad to fight with its chief, Adina Beg, *faujdar* of Jullendhar, asked Raghunath Rao to overrun Panjab, and Imad-ul Mulk, the imperial wazir, sought their aid in his fight with Najib-ud Daulah in Delhi.
  134. Dr. S. Abdullah, *Adabiyat-i Farsi Mein Hinduwan Ka Hissah*, Delhi 1942, pp. 52, 246.

135. *Adabiyat-i Farsi Mein Hinduwan Ka Hissah*, His other important works are: *Jawahar-ul Haroof*, *Nawadir-ul Masadir*, *Jawahar-ul Tarkeeb*.
136. For details of his life and literary achievements, S. Azhar Ali, *Safar Namah Anand Ram Mukhlis*, Rampur, 1946.
137. Lachhmi Narayan Shafiq was also the author of *Ma'sir-i Asafi Bisat-ul Ghaniyam Halat-i Hyderabad*, and *Chamistan-Shu 'ra Gul-i R 'ana*. For details, Dr. Abdul Haque, *Chamistan Shu'ra*, Aurangabad, 1928.
138. This list of Hindu scholars and historians cannot be indefinitely extended here. But a few more names and their works may be added: Anand Rup Brahman, *Meezan-i Danish*, 1758; Shiv Prashad, *Tarikh-i Faiz Baksh*, 1776; Munna Lal, *Tarikh-i Shah Alam*, 1778; Kishan Chand Ikhlas, *Hamesha Bahar*, 1723; Bhagwan Das, Hindi, *Tazkirah Hadiqt Hindi*, 1785; Bindrabhan Das, *Safina Khushgo*, 1742; Anand Ram, Son of Hiranand, *Siyaq Namah*, Lucknow, 1779.

NANDITA KHADRIA\*

## *Traditional Crafts and Occupational Structure of the Assamese Rural Society in the 19th Century\**

Regional variations have added interesting facets in the mainstream study of India under colonial subjugation. An attempt in studying the nature of the rural economy of the plains districts of Assam—better known as the Brahmaputra Valley—in this context reveals interesting facts regarding the nature of traditional industries of Assam.<sup>1</sup>

Abundance of arable land, and the typical practice under the Ahom administration (prior to British rule) whereby major portion of the state revenue used to be demanded in the form of personal services rendered by the adult male population, were two distinct features of an almost closed Ahom economy, bearing utmost relevance to some later developments. It appears that these contributed a great deal towards the lack of commercialization of Assamese cottage industry in comparison to its counterparts in the neighbouring states of Bengal, Bihar etc. Historical and administrative sources indicate that a visible growth had taken place in the internal and external commerce of the valley following British annexation of Assam in 1826 leading to both generation and redistribution of income. On the other hand private investment however remained limited—either in European enterprises, e.g. tea plantation, or in trade by Marwari merchants.

Earlier, although weaving, oil crushing, basket making, rice pounding and a number of other crafts were all carried on primarily within the household, industrial production at the artisanal level too had existed side by side under the Ahom patronage. These industries primarily catered to the consumption needs of the royalty and nobility, and, to a limited extent, the public. But the civil war and the Burmese invasion, followed by changes in administration brought about by the British, had weakened the base of these traditional industries. The subsequent competition from imported articles left the domestic industries without much hope for reconstructing it independently. The open-

---

\* Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies, J.N.U., New Delhi.

\*\* The author is indebted to Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya for comments on an earlier draft.

ing-up of the economy thus did not seem to benefit the indigenous industries until after a century later when parts of the accumulated commercial capital began to be invested in small scale industrial production.

#### A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

One general difficulty in historical research of the North-Eastern region is the non-availability of adequate recorded information. This problem permeates the research related to this paper too. The main sources referred to in connection with the work done may nevertheless be divided into two broad categories—the indigenous or Assamese, and the British sources. Amongst indigenous sources, the foremost are the *Buranjis* or the court-chronicles of the Ahom kings. Besides, two prominent Assamese monthlies, viz., *Mou* (1886-87) and *Arunodoi* (1846-82); *Ahomar Din*, compiled by Hiteswar Barbarua in the first decade of the 20th century, and a rare autobiography of a Marwari businessman, *Haribilas Agarwala Dangariar Atmajivani* (1942) are some of the specifically relevant works consulted in connection with this research. The English sources referred to in this paper mainly consist of the early accounts of the company officials and travellers; articles published in contemporary journals; the Census Reports; Gazetteers; The Enquiry Committee Report of 1888; the Annual Administrative Reports for the Presidency of Bengal and other particular official Reports; the industrial monographs; and the reports on the Annual River-borne Trade of Assam and the reports on the Trade with Neighbouring Hill Countries. No secondary literature of specific relevance or upto-date information was known about to provide a better foundation, particularly to the first part of the paper.

This paper argues that the growth of tea industry could not bring about any dynamic change in the occupational pattern of the indigenous population. This was despite the fact that agriculture had not reached any notable degree of commercialization and stagnation had become a regular feature in the traditional industries in this period. The occupational mobility of local labour towards the tea industry remained extremely low mainly because of low wages and unattractive terms of work offered. The major occupational shift was of the artisans from traditional industries towards full-time agriculture.

It may be noted that the principal exports of the valley in this period comprised raw materials of various kinds. Apart from reflecting on the stagnating condition of the domestic industries, this was also due to the fact that Assam was a late-comer so far as wider participation in commercial activities was concerned. By the time trade transactions were fully opened up with Bengal, Calcutta was the most important centre of economic activities in Eastern India, with its market almost monopolised by the industries of the surrounding neighbourhood of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Whatever few industries that languidly

survived in the Brahmaputra Valley, e.g. textile, metal manufacturing and, to some extent, lac were therefore not able to get any foothold against competition from counterparts in the neighbouring states.

Given this overall perspective the thrust of this paper is on some of the issues relating to the industrial development in the Brahmaputra Valley of the nineteenth century. Part I of the paper deals with the traditional industries—in terms of investigations into the state of technology, composition of the artisanal population engaged in the professions, and the impact of British annexation. Particular enquiries have also been made on the extent of penetration of merchant capital in production and distribution. In Part II, specific factors relating to the development of industries under the British rule, and the role of the colonial state in this regard are discussed. Although it is difficult to generalize on the basis of the inadequate information that is available, the paper looks into the nature of private investment if any along with the role of the colonial state—in order to assess whether these industries had any potential of further development that the circumstances denied. In comparison, the discussion in Part II is based on more authentic works of reference and hence lengthy in details.<sup>2</sup>

#### PART I: TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AS ON THE EVE OF BRITISH OCCUPATION: THE TECHNOLOGIES AND THE EXTENT OF THEIR PRACTICE

##### *Gold Washing*

It had been recorded by almost all the early travellers that many rivers used to yield gold dust of superior quality in the Valley. The best gold, according to William Robinson, used to be found in the most winding streams, having the strongest currents.<sup>3</sup> The fact that about 4000 *tolahs* of gold were paid annually to the royal treasury by the *Sonowal Paiks* (gold wahers)<sup>4</sup> does suggest that the industry yielded enough profit to induce the artisans into such a time and labour intensive industry. There were four different methods of gold washing, and implements used in the process were made either of bamboo or wood; *Sokali* used for digging the sand; *leheti*, for scraping and depositing sand in the basket; and *dorani*, a kind of wooden sieve.<sup>5</sup> The working team of *sonowals* consisted of five persons with four *Palis* headed by the *Pati*. There was a clear division of work in various stages.

An empirical study conducted by Capt. Hannay on the per capita productivity of the community of Kachari *Sonowals* shows that it varied from spot to spot. For example, the vicinity of Tengapanimukh yielded half a *tolah* of gold per head (worth Rs. 8.00) in a month; whereas the same amount of gold (valued at Rs. 12.00 per *tolah*)<sup>6</sup> could be extracted in three months in Noa-Dihing. The per man-day productivity of the other community, viz., Ahom or Bihiya *Sonowals* was higher than that of the Kachari *Sonowals*.<sup>7</sup> However the working methods of both the communities were equally popular.

According to Shihabuddin Talish the gold thus produced contributed at least ten to twelve thousand *tolahs* per year to the royal treasury.<sup>8</sup> 'Buranjis' (the Court Chronicles) and other sources too refer to similar amounts being collected by the Ahom state in addition to the taxes.<sup>9</sup> Gold came to the treasury from other sources as well. The amount however declined to about 2000 *tolahs* per annum after the civil war.

### *Iron Smelting*

Iron ores could be located mostly in upper Assam near brine springs. Similar to gold washing, the working team of iron smelters too consisted of five persons. Four *Palis* headed by an *oja* used to start operation near the brine springs around autumn, which then continued for six months. It took four to five days for the five men team to reach the rough surface of the bed of iron. The ore was then washed and cleaned and finally melted in small clay furnaces with the help of two extra persons. Twenty four hours of such work in the furnace used to yield the team about 52 *seers* of iron.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the gold washers, the iron smelters had to deposit the entire yield to the royal household. On an average six persons engaged in iron smelting took 81 days for producing 100 mds of iron, averaging 4.86 man-days for producing one md of iron (see Table 1 below).<sup>11</sup>

Table 1  
List of persons engaged and the days required  
for smelting 100 maunds of Iron

	<i>Stages</i>	<i>Persons required</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Total man-days</i>
1.	Searching the spot	6	5	30
2.	Digging	6	15	90
3.	Separating	6	11	66
4.	Burning the clay	6	30	180
5.	Melting the lump iron	5	20	100

### *Salt Manufacturing*

Brine springs in the valley were mostly concentrated around Borhat and Sadiya in the extreme east and around Namgarh in upper Assam. In a lengthy and laborious method similar to those of cold washing and iron smelting, brine-water used to be extracted from a well close to the brine-springs. These were then processed into lumpy salts by burning wood-fuel in nightly operations.<sup>12</sup> Buchanan Hamilton gives an estimate of salt worth Rs. 40,000 being manufactured in this manner from the brine-springs of Sadiya alone, in 1809. Although of a superior

quality, the higher prices of these salts over the Bengal salt made them available to the higher classes of the society only.<sup>13</sup>

### *Artillery*

Manufacturing of artillery of various kinds and sizes was at its peak during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,<sup>14</sup> unfortunately though, not much information have been recorded regarding these workshops. It is believed that the repeated Ahom-Mughal conflicts had resulted in improved techniques for gun and gunpowder manufacturing in the province. The production was carried on in small scale in different craft-shops or smithies of specific nature—all catering exclusively to the state demand.

### *Metal Manufacturing*

Brass, bell-metal and copper vessels continued to be manufactured even as late as the 1880s. 'With very few exceptions', observed Gait, 'the articles which are still manufactured in the Assam valley consist of cheap utensils in common daily use, the making of which requires no special skill and on which the cost of freight places imported wares at a disadvantage as compared with those made locally'.<sup>15</sup> Although apparently in greater demand locally, the low level of technology or skill, as referred to by Gait, indicate a lack of improvement in the methods of manufacturing over time. Whereas three quarters of a century before Hamilton had referred to metal casting, that particular branch of skill was no longer used.

Apart from use in artillery, iron was used for manufacturing smaller articles and procured mostly from the Garo hills for the purpose. There were five groups of goldsmiths (e.g. *Rajbhagia*, *Kuwanribhagia*, *Dewalia Sonari* etc.) who were engaged during the Ahom rule for the royal household alone, and six to seven groups of goldsmiths manufactured articles for common consumption. They worked on the supplied metal with very ordinary tools. The more intricate work on enamelling in gold was done in Jorhat by the *sunars*. While inferior in quality to European standards, these nonetheless involved a fair amount of skill.<sup>16</sup>

### *Carpentry*

The carpenters, according to Hamilton, were chiefly employed to construct boats and camoes. They also made coarse bed steads and chests, implements of agriculture, posts, doors and tools for looms etc.<sup>17</sup> Boats or camoes were generally made in the forests on the bank of some streams so that they could be floated down to the places of demand. Though this was particularly so in case of upper Assam, the practice of manufacturing was more or less the same in all parts of the Valley. The material used for manufacturing these were 'Sal', 'Ajhar', 'Gunsiri' and other evergreen timbers.



The trees for boats and canoes were sold in a roughly hollowed state. After further excavation these were then smeared with mud and put to a steaming process for softening them up. In case of splits the rent was patched with a piece of wood fastened by clamps. The boats manufactured in this process were about 60 ft. in length with a carrying capacity of 30 to 35 tons each.<sup>18</sup>

### *Pottery*

Like goldsmiths the *Kumars* too were divided into five classes according to hierarchy and consumption needs. The material used by the potters was a dark coloured clay which was usually found in the banks of streams. The wheel was used for rough-shaping of all articles except well-rings and flat or saucer like utensils. There was equal division of labour between men and women of the family in this industry—women mostly seeing through the final shaping and polishing etc. In case of potters without a wheel (e.g. *Hira Kumars*) even the rough moulding was done by the women.<sup>19</sup> The end product was mainly rough in texture. It is obvious that these products could not retain their market-share in the face of competition from the Bengal pottery as well as the cheap substitutes in brass utensils available at reasonable rates.

### *Silk*

Sericulture and weaving of silk was carried on for both household consumption purposes as well as for supply to the royalty and nobility of the Ahoms. Some amount of muga silk started being exported to Bengal and beyond around the last quarter of the 18th century.

Out of the four different kinds of silk worms reared in the province '*muga*', which was reared on the non-mulberry plant, was most common. The insect of this particular variety was fed on the tree as it grew. The total gestation period for a breed was 66 days. According to Robinson, the instruments used for winding the silk was 'the coarsest imaginable'.<sup>20</sup> Implements used for placing the cocoons were made of bamboo and the process involved engagement of two persons; fifty cocoons could be winded off in one thread, although twenty was the usual number.<sup>21</sup> The fact that about 35 years later Hunter quoted Robinson on the method of production, labour, output and the expenses involved in rearing *muga*, suggests that there was no change in any of these aspects of muga culture even at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

### *Lac*

Although lac maintained a more or less steady position at the top of the export list, bulk of the lac produced in the province was exported in its natural form, viz. stick lac. The only processing centres were situated in the districts of Kamrup and Sibsagar—both in an

insignificant scale. By the turn of the century manufacturing of lac wares was restricted to Sibsagar district alone.

One popular method adopted was that of washing the lac in alkaline water (*Khar pani*). The preparation of *Bhiri Laha* or boiled lac involved boiling of the stick lac for some hours until it was softened and formed into cakes. This form of lac retained the whole of the dye. The dye had to be prepared by extracting it from crude or boiled lac and was mainly used for dyeing yarns and clothes.<sup>23</sup> Lac wares were prepared by mixing shell lac with other substances like vermillion, orpiment, indigo, *kajal* etc. Artistic wares like trays and boxes, and the simpler ones like toys, legs of wooden seats, shuttles, lamp holders and cylinders of native drums etc. were manufactured in this way. Lac was also used for varnishing over designs printed on wooden surfaces as well as cement to fix metals.<sup>24</sup>

Amongst other household industries, oil pressing was carried on in the crude method of using two flat boards and a stone loaded small beam for crushing. There were very few cattle powered mill or *ghani* used in this period. Sugar used to be processed mostly in the *ghani*. Rice was pounded manually.

#### *Level of Technology: Production Organisation*

Our discussion so far points quite clearly to the fact that the general level of technology involved in these industries was quite low which underwent very little change in course of the nineteenth century. Abundance of timber and a limited supply of iron may, to some extent, account for the widespread use of wooden or bamboo-made tools used there. Like the rest of eastern India the use of metals was mostly restricted to the shaping of artisanal tools.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the scale of production was limited, particularly in industries like gold washing, iron smelting or salt manufacturing.

As such it is rather difficult to categorise these industries according to levels of production organisation, as in many cases production was carried on in more than one level. Processing of gold, salt, iron or artillery were carried on exclusively within the artisanal castes. Also, since these were not essentially household industries (employing only family labour) they involved fair amount of differentiation in function. However, because most of these industries were state-sponsored under a semi-feudal system of government there was no subsequent development of organisation in marketing of the produce. Despite the dispersed nature of production, brass and bell-metal manufacturing appear to have reached the second level of production where 'dadani' or advance was being practised. Production of silk was carried on in phases at domestic as well as artisanal levels. Although by 1823 the filature technique of winding silk was replacing the non-filature products in other parts of the country, muga, the leading export of the valley was still at the non-filature stage. Procurement of the material in most

cases had to be ensured by advancing money to the artisans.<sup>26</sup> Not much information is available regarding the production organisation of the carpenters or the boat-builders. With most of the timber being floated down the river Brahmaputra for the already established boat-builders of (then) Eastern Bengal, there was not much scope for an indigenous development of this industry. Blacksmiths, basket makers or the potters carried on their crafts essentially at primary level. Thus if we take technology as the determinant of change in production organisation,<sup>27</sup> none of these appear to have qualified for ushering in any higher form of production organisation.

## PART II

The central idea of David Scott, the Commissioner of Assam, in the early years of British administration was utilization of resources of the region. This concerned some of the industries discussed earlier in this paper, particularly silk which he believed could command the market once the newer methods of production were introduced. He believed that the export of bulky commodities like rice had no future on a commercial scale because of a difficult river system. Instead, he thought of a substitute plan for encouraging the production of more valued items such as opium, *muga* and mulberry, keeping in view prospective markets for them in Bengal, China and Europe respectively. This required substantial investment to give the scheme a start. Scott had counted upon the long-term returns, but the lack of response from the Government, followed by his death, put a stop to such schemes.<sup>28</sup>

As noted earlier, the production of silk being carried on in small scales, there was not much profit that the local farmers expected to derive from its existing forms.<sup>29</sup> The first step that Scott had taken was in 1834 with investment primarily on sericulture. He introduced reelers, reels and plants of '*Morus alba*' from Rongpur and established a factory in Darrang with the objective of extending the cultivation of *pat* or mulberry worms and of improving the reeling of *muga* worms. However, as Allen observed: 'The practical results of the experiment were slight and nothing more was done to encourage sericulture in Darrang'.<sup>30</sup> After this initial failure it was realized that a change in the nature and speed of production needed an investment of more than a few reels and plants. Between 1834 and 1840, cocoons and threads of *muga* worm with specimens of the woven cloth were submitted to the Silk Committee of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society for approval, but despite favourable reports the scheme was not successful. Thereafter no further experiments were made as 'the difficulty and expenses of procuring the labour required'<sup>31</sup> was great.

A comparison of the figures of the censuses of 1872 and 1891 shows that in 1891 the number of persons obtaining their livelihood from reeling, spinning and weaving was 1,693 whereas the 1872 census had

registered the number of silk weaving castes (including reelers, spinners and cleaners etc.) at 68,685.<sup>32</sup> Even if we leave a considerable number as children below age and dependents, and consider the results of the census as less accurate there seems a great disparity between the two figures. It indicates that in proportion to the persons belonging to the castes of spinners and weavers, the number of persons actually earning their livelihood from the profession was much less. Thus a mere lack of skilled artisans does not seem to be the case. Perhaps it was the supply of trained labour for an advanced technology which was scarce and expensive in this context.<sup>33</sup> A discussion, later in the paper, on the composition of the artisanal population would throw further light on the issue of skilled labour. Anyway, the small investment on the sericulture programme<sup>34</sup> that took place was not followed by introduction of filature techniques. Without this, the silk of the Valley had no market prospects because by 1823 the Company's raw silk export to Europe had comprised entirely filature wound silk.

As the quality of *eri* silk was far inferior to *pat* (mulberry) or *muga* (non-mulberry), the cloth brought for sale too was much inferior and it remained so till the end of the century despite the fact that its exports outweighed the other two varieties. But as noted by the district heads, even in this branch of the silk culture it was 'impossible to obtain any appreciable quantity without a considerable expenditure of time and trouble'.<sup>35</sup> Hence throughout the period under study *eri* silk was procured in its crude form for sale mainly in the neighbouring hills.

The repercussions of the general policy of promoting British industrial interests after the declaration of The Charter Act of 1833 was reflected on the domestic industries of Assam as well. When in the 1880s the market value for the region's silk was re-considered it was only in cocoons and not even in threads, on the pretexts that 'the reeling is of rudest character possible', 'the thread is coarse and uneven' and that 'the *eri* thread is still more uneven, 'gouty' and knobby and would probably be regarded by the English manufacturer 'as unfit for employment for any purpose' whereas, 'from the export of cocoons, on the other hand there may be some hope'.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note here that a gentleman engaged in manufacturing of silk in England was said to have observed that 'No *muga* or *eri* waste cocoons have, as far as I know, ever been sold in the London market . . . Tussar waste silk, however, is regularly sold in London', although 'I should say the *eri* and *muga* would be much more valuable'. His observations apparently had some impact, for E. Stack noted: 'although China had hitherto been the principal source of supply, there is no reason why Assam should not contribute large quantities of an article which is produced with so much ease in Brahmaputra Valley'.<sup>37</sup> He further explained that the demand for waste or thrown silk was assured as it could be used in the production of spun silk. In his view Assam 'possessed 'superior capabilities' for supplying to a demand of this nature and as

such she 'ought to be in a much better position to supply cocoons to the English silk spinners than the principal Tussar producing districts of Bengal'.<sup>38</sup>

However, despite assured demands, these possibilities were not justifiably explored. Although some experiments were done by C.H. Leppers with *eri* in the Lakhimpur district in 1872-73—which were reported considerably favourable and which held the possibility of improving them in size and quality—he refrained from advising Messrs Lister & Co. to take up land for *eri* culture on the grounds of labour shortage and the process being a costly activity. Although some 400 to 500 CWT of *eri* cocoons were still exported annually from Goalpara to Calcutta for shipment to London, this was 'very far from representing the full productive capabilities of the Assam valley' and no project was taken up for the proposed improvement.

By 1870, Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang had become the chief lac producing and exporting zones in the valley. Export figures indicate that lac was a major item of export in this period. However, the bulk of it was still exported in the crudest form, known as stick lac. The only exception was a few maunds of manufactured lac which were artificially propagated in Kamrup<sup>39</sup> and the Sadar subdivisions of Cachar.<sup>40</sup> The Deputy Collector of Darrang district reported around 1905 that the lac rearing industry in his district 'was ruined some years ago' by a blight which largely destroyed the insect. Around 1885 several thousands of ficus trees were planted at the foot of the Garo hills in the Goalpara subdivision for lac cultivation, but this was abandoned owing to the spread of the Kala-azar epidemic. Apart from the natural calamities contributing to the failure of lac culture in the valley, there is no other reference to attempts at developing a home industry from this major item of export.

The much discussed opium policies of the colonial government almost entirely influenced the state of this industry in the Brahmaputra Valley. Cultivation of poppy was first introduced in Assam in 1770. Observations made by Hamilton in 1808 and by M'Cosh in 1837 point to the fact that opium was cultivated extensively in the valley.<sup>41</sup> It grew particularly luxuriantly in most part of western Assam, and it was alleged that about 80 per cent of Assamese population<sup>42</sup> were opium addicts, a fact which drew immediate attention of the British administrators. The policy proposed by David Scott concerning opium was to invest in purchasing local opium and exporting it on government account. He even urged upon the Company to treat Assam as a special case by allowing her a share in the opium monopoly. However although cultivation of poppy had increased due to its growing importance as a cash crop, no efforts were made in the subsequent years to standardise the indigenous opium as planned by Scott. Emphasis was rather shifted towards importing opium to the state and selling them at a high price. This, it was assumed, would be instrumental in

checking the consumption of opium. The question of restricting and prohibiting cultivation of poppy too were considered as early as 1840 but a policy of non-interference was decided upon.<sup>43</sup>

In this phase of 'non-intervention' (1826-1840), however, the government intervention was extended to the spheres of production and distribution of opium when individual cultivation continued side by side with import and sale of Abkari opium. Also featuring prominently were contradictory observations made during this period regarding the impact of such high degree of opium addiction on the population. Whereas, it was observed by 'no less an authority than Sir Benjamin Broodie, that opium eating as compared to spirit drinking, is comparatively harmless, as well socially as to the physical constitution of the person who uses it',<sup>44</sup> it was also observed by Col. Mathie that 'it is the poorer classes who become emancipated from taking opium as they will often forgo all other kinds of subsistence to obtain it'. The worst affected were the residents of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Mattak districts who were more addicted to *kanee* than those of Kamrup and Darrang.<sup>45</sup>

Although increase in the cultivation of poppy had resulted from a strong demand for cash, it had the undesired effect of making people more addicted to the habit of opium consumption. Besides, this must have also contributed in the shrinkage of overall cultivated acreage in Darrang and Nowgong districts as poppy cultivation was more labour-intensive and profitable as compared to ordinary crops. However promotion of opium cultivation as an important cash crop was neither lucrative when compared to the excise revenue earned by the import of the item, nor was it to the interest of the tea industry. Thus the next decisive step taken by the administrators was to prohibit the cultivation of opium in the region—but not its consumption. Sale of *abkari* opium which started in 1851-52 continued as before, but in order to promote the sales further, licences were issued in unrestricted manner to 'respectable persons' without any payment whatsoever.<sup>46</sup>

In 1860s the price charged for opium was Rs. 14 per seer which increased to Rs. 20 per seer in 1862; Rs. 22 in 1866, Rs. 23 in 1873 and Rs. 24 in 1874. In 1872-73, there were as many as 5,137 opium shops (this being almost equal to the number of villages), out of which 867 were located in Nowgong district.<sup>47</sup> In the Annual Administrative Report of the Presidency of Bengal, it was noted, 'with the higher prices now fixed and the substitution of Government opium for the entaxed indigenous drug in Assam, a considerable increase of revenue may be expected from this source',<sup>48</sup> which proved to be quite true. The amount collected as opium revenue remained almost half of the total revenue until 1870s. In 1864-65, the opium revenue amounted to Rs. 1,083,642 while the land revenue yielded Rs. 1,001,773 only. The total demand of excise revenue during 1874-75 was Rs. 1,380,613 against Rs. 1,344,909 in 1873-74. This recorded an increase of Rs. 164,404 in comparison with the

average annual revenue of the preceding five years—and the increase was mainly under the heads 'Ganja' and 'opium', the two excisable articles most in demand in the province. The share of opium in the total demand for excise revenue constituted Rs. 1,199,446 or 86.87 per cent. District-wise percentages in the total demand for excise revenue in 1874-75 was as follows (Table 2).

Table 2  
Percentage of Districts to Total Collection

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sibsagar	24.12
Lakhimpur	18.27
Kamrup	14.0
Nowgong	12.44
Darrang	11.7
Cachar	7.11
Goalpara	4.6
Khasis Hills	0.06
Naga Hills	0.04
Sylhet	7.66

Source: *Report on the Administration of Excise Revenue in Assam, 1874-75* (RAERA), p.2.

Table 3  
The incidence of excise duties per head in the  
Brahmaputra Valley districts

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Amount</i>		
	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>As.</i>	<i>Pies</i>
Goalpara	0	2	3
Kamrup	0	5	6
Darrang	0	10	10
Nowgong	10	10	9
Sibsagar	1	2	0
Lakhimpur	2	1	3
Average for Brahmaputra Valley	0	9	9
Average for Surma Valley	0	1	8
The Hills	0	0	1 1/4

Source: RAERA, 1874-75, p. 3

It was noted in the Annual Report on The Administration of Excise Revenue in Assam for 1874-75 that 'In proportion to population, Assam pays a heavy excise revenue and the total amount levied is larger than

is paid by the Punjab and any of the local administration immediately under the Government of India<sup>49</sup> (see Table 3). The total quantity of opium consumed throughout the province during the year 1874-75 was 1837 mds and 13 seers. The enormity of this can be understood from the following statement as it was stated to be '100 mds in excess of the quantity of excise opium sold in British Burma, Oudh and North Western Provinces put together and in proportion much more than is consumed in Bengal'.<sup>50</sup> The consumption of opium per head of population in each district was as follows (Table 4):

Table 4  
Opium Consumption per capita 1874-75

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Consumption</i>
Lakhimpur	10 tolahs
Sibsagar	5 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub> "
Darrang	3 "
Nowgong	3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>5</sub> "
Kamrup	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> "
Goalpara	1/2 "

It was also observed that with the exception of the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong, where the consumption decreased a little, there was an increase in the quantity of opium sold.

It was only towards the late eighties that it was observed in the Enquiry Committee Report of 1888,<sup>51</sup>

The prohibition of cultivation of opium in Assam, which dates from the year 1860, and confined consumption to the highly priced Government opium by successive enhancement from Rs. 14 in 1859-60 to Rs. 32 per seer has had the effect of keeping down and of late years even reducing the consumption.

But not only this decline was marginal, it also proved contrary to the anticipations of the educated Assamese expressed in the Assamese monthly 'Arunodoi' that much good would come out of the prohibition of opium cultivation in the region.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Minerals and Forest Products*

The Assam Valley's richness in many natural resources has been acknowledged time and again. Coal beds are known to exist under the entire geographical stretch of the province but those being made operational earlier than others were the rich ones located in upper Assam. In Darrang, the Barnadi and Dikhou river beyond the frontiers had coal contents. Coal belts were also discovered in Nowgong.



However, the chief belts were located in Saltraí and Dikhu valleys in Sibsagar district and Makum in Lakhimpur, which uniformly contained good variety of coal. Besides, two other beds in Sibsagar, and Jaipur in Lakhimpur had coal contents. The probable outturn of coal was predicted by Hunter, for the two beds in Sibsagar, to be at 10,000,000 tons and 3,000,000 tons respectively—3,000,000 tons for the Makum bed and 10,000,000 tons for the Jaipur bed in Lakhimpur district.<sup>53</sup> Despite their promising richness, however, the mines remained unexplored barring an unsuccessful attempt by Scott (which failed due to lack of perusal).<sup>54</sup>

Even towards the end of the nineteenth century there were very few mines, their workings being of very simple nature and investment little. A major problem as suggested was transport, because that network had expanded primarily for the benefit of the sea industry. Further, coal as a fuel was not in demand locally due to the absence of any machine industry in Assam. No statistics for the river traffic in coal are available of the two districts for the 1870s. The lower Assam districts were recorded to have imported coal at the time, but it is difficult to conjecture whether these came from the upper Assam or from Bengal. Mill's statistics for the year 1852 of Sibsagar district show an export of 2,500 mds of coal at an average price of Rs. 0.25 per md. The next increase in the export of coal may only be noticed in the last decade of the 19th century, possibly as a result of the construction of railways.

Similar was the state of the valuable forest products, mainly timber of various kinds which faced a steady domestic demand in the form of packing-boxes.<sup>55</sup> Timber was also in demand from the Public Works Department for construction work. But despite the demand, no industry developed excepting for a few small-scale boat-manufacturing ones, most of which were concentrated in the North Goalpara region. On an average, timber worth Rs. 727,152 was annually exported to Bengal towards the end of the period under study. Nearly all of this was supplied from the forests in Goalpara district, the northern slopes of the Garo hills and the western portion of Kamrup. The export of timber from Assam furnished employment for about 600 native boats, which belonged to Bengal—most of these timbers finding ready sale at the large marts of Dacca and Shirajganj.<sup>56</sup> Along with rubber and other forest products, the export of timber contributed a considerable share in the total revenue, excluding tea and abkari opium.

Some other products of the region which either remained under-utilized or were utilized for the benefit of industries located outside the region, were jute, mustard and cotton. Jute had gained importance as an export item from the middle of the 19th century. However, like all other major exports from the Valley it was exported in raw form, whereas the finished products such as gunny bags were imported into the districts from Bengal. Indigenous cotton went unginned to Bengal, and European and Indian twists and yarns as well as piecegoods were

imported in bulk into the region. On an average 5,375 cwts of European yarn, 63 cwts of Indian yarn, 5,468,276 cwts of European piecegoods and 44,041 cwts of Indian piecegoods were imported in the five years from 1881 to 1885 which accounted for about Rs. 2 per head of consumption.<sup>57</sup> As against this an average 14,111.57 cwts of registered cotton and about 19,743 cwts of unregistered cotton (in 1884-85) was recorded to have left the Valley in the referred five years. The import of edible oil indicates a steady domestic demand for the item. However, as noticed earlier, the bulk of mustard was exported as seeds which in view of the home demands, could have led to the growth of a small scale oil crushing industry under promotional schemes. But production of oil continued to be carried on mainly for household consumption needs through primitive technology.

Private investment of any considerable amount was confined to tea industry alone. A considerable amount of capital in the form of merchant capital owned chiefly by the Marwari traders, however, did circulate, though this was invested mainly on advances for ensuring procurement of the items concerned. In the memoirs of Haribilas Agarwala (b. 1842) we come across some information on sporadic investment in rubber forests (1969) and in saw mills (1883),<sup>58</sup> which met with repeated failures, and were subsequently abandoned.

#### *A Note on the Supply of Labour*

The state of the indigenous industries as it was, or rather the reason for which they could not attract any investor, was attributed by the administrators as well as the planters chiefly to the shortage, dearness, and unwillingness to work of the local labour. Since returns from tea were very lucrative, labour for tea industry was procured through means fair or foul. But despite various steps taken by the government, such as repeated enhancement of tax, prohibition of opium cultivation etc., the local labour could not be successfully channellized into the tea gardens primarily due to the very low rates of wages offered by the planters.<sup>59</sup> An important factor contributing towards the shortage of labour was the relatively small number of landless labourers in the Valley. The statistical account of the six districts of the Brahmaputra Valley provided by W.W. Hunter suggests that except in Goalpara the number of landless labourers was insignificant in the Valley. In connection with Nowgong district he observed:

The Deputy Commissioner states that there is no apparent tendency towards the growth of a distinct class of day labourers who neither possess nor rent any land of their own, although a few people are to be found in the district who do not possess land, but serve as labourers.<sup>60</sup>

The situation applied to more or less all the other remaining districts too.

Data relating to later years reveal a similar trend despite substantial immigration during that period. Table 5 shows the number of agricultural labourers and their proportion to the agricultural population.

Table 5  
Number of agricultural labourers and their proportion to the agricultural population

	Population 1901	supported 1911	Working 1921	population 1931
A. Number in Millions:				
Bihar and Orissa	(3.6)*	7.1	3.8	5.0
Bengal	(1.4)	(3.4)	2.1	3.3
Assam	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.7
Total	(5.8)	(11.3)	(6.5)	(9.0)
B. Proportion in Per Cent				
Bihar and Orissa	(14.0)	24.1	26.0	35.2
Bengal	(4.8)	(10.0)	17.7	33.2
Assam	(15.2)	13.0	19.9	22.2
Total	(9.6)	(16.3)	22.1	32.9

\* Figures within brackets are under-estimates.

Source: S.J. Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*, Bombay, 1952, Table 3, p. 26. Due to the nature of data it is not possible to make an accurate estimation of the actual number of agricultural workers for 1901 or 1911. However there was an obvious increase in the number in the later years.

The landless labourers formed between 20 and 40 per cent of the total agricultural population in Assam in the beginning of the twentieth century. This was of course higher than the northern provinces. However, the high proportion was due mainly to the presence of large number of tea labourers.<sup>61</sup> It appears thus that if the tea garden labourers are excluded the number of landless labourers in the Brahmaputra Valley would be considerably small.

The recruitment of labour for the tea industry in the initial phases was confined mostly to Chhota Nagpur, Ghazipur, Benaras and Bihar. The results of a survey of the composition of immigrant labourers in Assam conducted in the year 1901 are given in Table 6.

Tables 7 and 8 show the approximate wages received by different types of workers in the Brahmaputra Valley districts.

Table 6  
Number of Immigrant Labourers from Different Parts of India

Districts of Recruitment	Number of Labourers
Ranchi	91,794
Manbhum	69,728
Hazaribagh	68,772
Singhbhum	12,927
Santhal Parganas	13,237
Midnapore	17,923
Sambalpur	9,437

Source: *Report of Assam Labour Enquiry Commission, 1906, Appendix B, pp. 148-9.* See R.P. Behl, *Conditions of Labour in Assam Valley Tea Plantations: 1900-1930, 1977* (unpublished).

Table 7  
Wage Received by Different Workers in the Brahmaputra Valley  
(a) Monthly Wages Received till 1860 (in Rs.)

Profession	Goalpara	Kamrup	Darrang	Nowgong	Sibsagar	Lakhimpur
Coolies/ ordinary day labourers	3.00 to 4.00	-	1.88 to 2.81	1.88	3.75	-
Agricultural daily labour	3.00 to 4.00	-	in kind	-	-	-
Carpenter	12.00 to 15.00	-	-	8.00 to 20.00	5.50	-
Bricklayer	12.00 to 15.00	-	-	8.00 to 15.00	8.00	-
Smiths	-	-	-	8.00 to 15.00	10.00	-

(b) Monthly Wages Received between 1860 and 1876

Profession	Goalpara	Kamrup	Darrang	Nowgong	Sibsagar	Lakhimpur
Coolies/ ordinary day labourers	4.00 to 6.00	6.00 to 7.50	5.63 to 7.50	5.63 to 7.50	7.50	5.63 to 7.50
Agricultural daily labour	4.00 to 6.00	6.00 to 7.50	in kind	-	-	5.63 to 7.50
Carpenters	12.00 av.	16.88	-	10.00 to 20.00	16.00*	15.00
Bricklayer	12.00 av.	16.88	-	10.00 to 30.00	16.00	7.50 to 11.25
Smiths	-	-	-	8.00 to 20.00	-	15.00

\* The 2nd class carpenters and bricklayers received between Rs. 30.00 and Rs. 40.00 per month.

Source: Processed from Hunter's informations on wages in *A Statistical Account of Assam, 1876*, vols. I and II, *op.cit.*

Table 8  
Wages Received per month from 1865 to 1910

<i>Year</i>	<i>Able-bodied agricultural labour</i>	<i>Common mason, carpenters and blacksmiths</i>
1885	8.00	15.00 to 30.00
1890	8.00 to 9.00	14.00 to 40.00
1895	8.00 to 10.00	12.00 to 60.00
1900	8.00 to 11.00	12.00 to 60.00
1905	8.00 to 12.00	12.00 to 45.00
1910	8.00 to 10.00	20.00 to 40.00

Source: *Prices and Wages in India*, for the mentioned years (Annual Reports), Department of Government of India, Calcutta.

It has been observed that the 'high rates of wages now ruling (1888) in Assam are at the same time one of the best evidences of the ease and comfort with which the ryot can subsist on his own land as an independent man . . .'<sup>62</sup> Similar observations or comments were made in almost all the contemporary official correspondences upon the high wages prevailing in the region. However, as it appears this was a relative evaluation made with the tea labourer's wages in mind, which was much lower in comparison to wages received by other workers. In the initial phases of the industry the average wage earned by a tea garden labourer ranged between Rs. 2.50 and Rs. 4.00.<sup>63</sup> In the period of contract wages were offered on the basis of stipulated daily work at Rs. 5, Rs. 4 and Rs. 3 per man, woman and child respectively. These rates continued unchanged till 1881. Even in the period between 1873 and 1910 the average monthly wage received by a tea labourer was almost half the amount received by an agricultural labourer.<sup>64</sup> With the beginning of Public Works Department construction works in the 1860s the tea planters started facing competition from the government regarding wages. Whereas in 1864 the Assam Company was paying Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per month, the government labourers were offered Rs. 7 a month.

The increase in the prices as noted repeatedly by the administrators had a prejudiced emphasis on the rise in prices of items which were supposedly produced locally implying thereby a general condition of ease and prosperity.<sup>66</sup> 'It is a curious anomaly to see mustard seed getting dearer, and the oil pressed from it getting cheaper'. This, however, was explained by the same authority in terms of improved manufacturing techniques as well as means of communication in case of the imported items. Also the fact was overlooked that even other than salt, sugar and oil which registered fall in prices, a large portion of the

staples e.g. rice, wheat etc. were imported from Bengal and beyond. (The quantity of common rice obtained for one rupee had fallen by 1880s by nearly 40 per cent and that of wheat by 60 per cent which affected price even of the other items produced locally). The high rate of consumption of the imported piece goods too had some bearing on the enhancement of prices. Among other factors contributing considerably towards the rise in prices was the deep penetration of dealers and traders in the marketing of commodities. The settlement operation of 1867 had enhanced the land revenue demand two-fold.<sup>67</sup> This was followed by discriminatory settlements of waste lands, the rate of revenue for which was kept consistently below that of the land under traditional cultivation. This favoured the planters and resulted in a relative shrinkage of cultivation in the non-tea agriculture sector despite the increasing pressure of population on land. Thus, contrary to official explanation, the rise in prices of agricultural products did not indicate better economic condition of the peasantry. It was assumed by the authorities on one hand that the high wages commanded in the region was 'one of the best evidences of ease and comfort of the ryot', on the other, the enhanced wages of the professions such as Khansama, sweeper, clerk, munsif, peshkar etc. where local representation was very low were justified on the ground of costlier means of subsistence.<sup>68</sup>

Regarding the wages received by the agricultural labour we may quote Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Sharma, who observed: 'Field labourers are paid in kind and sometimes in money. In the latter case advances are made sometimes on a written agreement and sometimes without it. This is called the Bondha system'. But as Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Bannerjee, EAC, observed in the context: 'Monthly wages are an exception rather than the rule; when, however, labour is hired on the monthly system, it is paid at from Re. 1 to Rs. 2, to Rs. 2 to Rs. 8, according to age and ability besides food'.<sup>69</sup>

In view of the high prices prevailing around the time, the wages offered do not seem very high. Agricultural indebtedness, along with the high prices and escalation in revenue demanded forced the local labour, otherwise trained in specialized crafts, into becoming traditional agriculturists or resorting to non-tea sectors as occasional labourers. It is worth noting here that in contrast to the tea entrepreneurs 'the Kayas (Marwari traders) find no difficulty in obtaining local labour either for transporting their goods or for their household necessities',<sup>70</sup> as the 'Kayah' or the Marwari trader as the money-lender no doubt bound the worse off peasants to them but at the same time offered some sort of security over the low-waged tea garden work or the well-paid but random work of the mason or the carpenters. Under the circumstances, it was but natural that the Public Works Department had to offer higher wages to the labourers to ensure service in the construction schemes.

*Composition and Numerical Strength of the Artisanal Population*

During Ahom rule, the population was evenly distributed among functionally classified occupations. Strictly speaking, a systematic division of the population according to occupational functions in the Assamese society may be traced back to the ministership of Momai Tamuli Barbarua in the 16th century. Artisanal castes like the 'baniya', 'Sutar' (carpenters), 'karmakar', 'chandala', 'makar', 'kumbhakar', 'nata' are mentioned in the biographies of the contemporary Vaishnava philosophers.<sup>71</sup> Other than these there were the 'yogis' (snake charmer), 'jugis' and 'katanis' (silk worm rearers), 'hiras' (potter), 'dhobas' (washer man), 'napits' (barbers) etc. . . 'whose professions made an indelible mark on their caste or social position'.<sup>72</sup>

The principal artisanal population during Ahom rule comprised gold washers, silver washers, iron smelters, potters and the brass manufacturers. Kacharis, Bihiyas, Kochs and Keots were the four principal communities forming the group of *Sonowals* or gold washers. Sources refer to above 20,000 *sonowals* having been engaged in the profession during the reign of Ahom king Chakradhwaj Singha (1663-1670). The number had reduced to 16,000 towards the end of the 18th century which declined further by the first quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Four groups of '*Sonaris*' for the royalty and six groups for the public formed the indigenous community of goldsmiths into which some immigrant artisans were later incorporated.<sup>74</sup>

*Lo-Salias* and *Kamars* were the two main categories of blacksmiths apart from the artisans who migrated to the region in the 17th and 18th centuries. Hiteswar Barbarua estimates that only 40 to 50 houses of *Lo-Salias* survived the civil war. The Census of 1872 estimated 10,363 persons as belonging to the *Kumbhar* caste, out of which 2,337 were shown to be engaged in the profession. The leading brass manufacturers of upper Assam, the *Titabaria Phaid*, had its market spread all over the valley. There were also the specific artisanal castes like *Morias* and *Hiras* engaged in the profession.<sup>75</sup> Other than these the rest of the indigenous artisanal population consisted of the *Jolas* (cotton weavers), *Barhoi Khanikar* (carpenters), *Bhaskar Khanikar* (turners and iron curvers), *Teli, Silkatias* (stone curvers), *Lonpurias* (salt manufacturers) and the *Katanis* or the silk rearers.

It is worthwhile to mention here that according to the nineteenth century observers viz., Hamilton and Gait, although the Hindu caste system was recognised in the land, functional division had to a great extent remained outside the caste framework. Functionally the people were known by the *Khel* or groups indicating their respective occupations. This somewhat confusing feature may be explained with the help of references made by Hamilton and Gait. Hamilton had observed in the early nineteenth century that most trade was carried on by the *Kalitas* and *Koch*, without distinction of castes, but that a continuous inflow of artisans and people from Bengal had probably

succeeded in great measure in separating different professions into distinct castes.<sup>76</sup> Gait too referred to this process which according to him started during the reign of Ahom King Pratap Singha (1611-1696) and added that the time, however, between this immigration and British occupation of Assam was too short for any large scale development of special skills in the land. 'Once exposed to external trade', he observed, 'the effect of this absence of specialised skill and the want of fixity of occupation soon became apparent'.<sup>77</sup>

Presumably, this feature following the decline of some traditional industries had also contributed towards the switchover of most of the artisanal groups into traditional agriculture. The 1881 census report stated that many people belonging to particular artisanal castes attached, instead of their own caste names, the surname 'Khalita' (primarily denoting functional agriculturists) to their names.<sup>78</sup> It may be observed that this need for identification through social and not the traditional functional castes by some of the artisanal groups at the end of the nineteenth century only reflects a state of underdevelopment and decline of these indigenous industries.

*The New Artisanal Population emerging towards the end of 19th century*

No data are available on the composition and numerical strength of artisanal population in the region for the early years of the period studied. Best estimates possible would therefore be made with the help of census figures of a later date. In the following tables we have the number of persons in each artisanal caste and occupation in the Brahmaputra Valley as available in the Censuses of 1872 and 1881 respectively. The new structure of artisanal population that emerged from these two Censuses are somewhat as follows:

If we go by the artisanal population according to caste as recorded in the Census of 1872 (Table 9), 71,343 persons belonged to the caste of weavers. Dependents excluded, this may roughly come near to the number of weavers (39,325) according to the Census of 1881 (Table 11). It was explained by the census officers that 'cotton cloth manufacture or weaving occupies nearly half of the industrial population of the valley . . . but it is possible that this is only recorded as an occupation against those who earn their living by it and who are widows'.<sup>79</sup>

Increase was however recorded in the number of occupations like carpenters, tailors, potters, goldsmiths, braziers, blacksmiths etc. There was about 575 per cent increase in the number of carpenters, 343 per cent increase in the number of blacksmiths, 325 per cent increase in the number of braziers, 124 per cent increase in the number of goldsmiths, 201 per cent increase in the number of potters, and 173 per cent increase in the number of tailors in 1881 over 1872 (ie. over a decade). Thus there was an apparent increase in the number of persons engaged in principal crafts of the region in the nine years between 1872 and 1881. However,



Table 9  
Artisanal Population according to Caste, 1872

<i>Castes</i>	<i>Number</i>
Kumhar (blacksmith)	1,996
Kansari (braziers)	1,736
Kumbhar (potters)	10,363
Hira (potters)	6,471
Sunar (goldsmith)	3,293
Sunri (distiller)	13,496
Sutradhar (carpenter)	13,668
Teli (oilman)	3,348
Others	111
Weavers:	
Jugi	28,272
Kapali	364
Katani	40,413
Tanti	1,415
Chapwal	168
Kashta	190
Patua	160
Kheri	250
Others	111

Source : C.I., 1872, Chapter V, pp.cxxxviii-cx1.

Table 10  
Artisanal Population according to Occupation, 1872.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Rajmistri	85
Carpenters	555
Palki Builders	212
Blacksmith	733
Braziers	31
Kansaris	209
Goldsmiths	941
Potters	2,337
Cotton spinner	345
Tailors	422
Ornament makers	180

Source : *Census of India*, 1872, chap. VI, pp. clxxiii-clvii.

Table 11  
Artisanal Population Exceeding 1000 in number 1881

<i>Caste</i>	<i>Number</i>
Carpenters	3,744
Coffon cloth manufacturers	39,325
Barbers	1,131
Tailors	1,150
Washerman	8,137
Milk sellers	1,757
Dealers in flour	7,677
Sellers of narcotics	1,063
Oil pressers	1,351
Potters	7,036
Goldsmith	2,102
Braziers	1,021
Blacksmiths	3,247

Source: *Census of Assam*, 1881, p. 122.

observations made by contemporary government officials regarding the indigenous artisanal population lead us to believe that the rate of increase was enhanced not entirely by the expansion of indigenous artisanal industries but rather by immigration of artisans from Bengal or beyond as also partly due to better method of enumeration adopted in the latter census. So far as the local artisanal population was concerned, they, for the most part, seem to have changed their profession primarily to agriculture. Although there are no statistical evidences, we may presume that this process of shift in the occupational pattern of the indigenous artisanal population started soon after the British annexation of the province since market for all the local manufacturers started declining gradually thereafter.

Remarkable changes may thus be noticed in the composition of the industrial population of the Valley. The principal artisanal population during the Ahom rule consisted of the *Sonowals*, or gold washers, the *Thegals* (silver washers), the *Lo salias* (iron smelters), potters and the brass manufacturers. The Census of 1881 on the other hand enlisted as principal industrial class the population engaged in working and dealing in art and mechanics, textile fabrics and dress, food and drinks, animal substances, vegetable substances and minerals. Among the 14 groups under the industrial class which exceeded 1000 in number, the cloth manufacturers, the barbers, the tailors, the washerman, milk sellers, dealers in flour, sellers of narcotics were the newer industrial classes of importance.<sup>80</sup> The groups which were

totally absent in the industrial class of 1881 were the gold washers, the silver washers, iron smelters and the salt manufacturers.

Towards the end of the 19th century Gait observed: 'Census of 1881 revealed almost entire absence in the Assam Valley of the professional castes which are found in other parts'.<sup>81</sup> The phenomenon was explained more clearly in the Enquiry Committee Report of 1888: 'The class of artisans are dying out. We get imported articles cheaper and they are also better. For this reason indigenous artisans and manufacturers are neglected'.<sup>82</sup>

What the sources (contemporary or the colonial) neglected to discuss is the impact of the decline of indigenous crafts on the industrial population in particular, and on society in general. They do however provide us with information which throw some light on this aspect. It was noted in the Enquiry Committee Report of 1888,

Just about when the British power settled in the country, few people had brazen ornaments and utensils and pots were either earthen or wooden . . . Times have changed; gold ornaments, gold beads, brazen Gharra and cups, plates and silk clothes may now be seen in the houses of the common people. . . They utilize them (referring to money) by purchasing such things as soon as they can. Sonaris or Karis (goldsmith) are the only artisans who are usefully employed. The other classes have declined.<sup>83</sup>

It is also evident from the import figures that the imported items were preferred presumably because of their cheapness. The local producer could not compete with these. It was noted in the Report of 1888 that a considerable number of cultivators carried on regular trade in the intervals of their agricultural operations. For example, Morias, who were braziers by profession were almost without exception cultivators too. 'All the goldsmiths and ivory carvers of Jorhat hold land and grow some of their food. Many cultivators make mats and baskets for sale. Some have taken to iron work and forge daos and small betel cutting knives'.<sup>84</sup> This, in short, gives us some idea regarding the change in occupational pattern of the indigenous artisanal population in the region.

Thus it is not surprising that the Census of 1881, as observed by Gait, revealed a complete absence of the artisanal castes in the Valley that were found in other parts of the country. By the time systematic census surveys were started a section of the indigenous artisanal population had mixed or changed their occupations and identified themselves as belonging to the multi-occupational caste of Kolitas.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In concluding the paper we find that stagnation was the main feature of domestic industries of the Brahmaputra Valley in the nineteenth century. The expansion of domestic markets was mainly to

accommodate the increasing imported articles at the cost of the local crafts. The few industries which continued production on limited scales (e.g. textiles, metal manufacturing and lac), were all subjugated to merchant capital. However, noticeably enough this penetration of merchant capital did not lead to a subsequent growth of capitalistic form of production either. There was no significant urbanisation and detachment of the artisan from agriculture; rather the reverse was the case. Consequently, this lack of organisation of the artisans left them defenceless against the competition from mill-made cheaper products and pushed them further towards agricultural activities. Besides, the comparative advancement of industries in the neighbouring states reduced the export demands in the valley to that primarily for raw materials. Hence to the merchant trader, investment in trade and usury seem to have become more lucrative. Consequently, the peasant-producer remained greatly in the clutch of indebtedness of the merchant-usurer.

Excepting for a few initial plans and proposals, there is not much evidence of any substantial investment actually made by the colonial state in this period. State patronage by the end of the century was firmly channelised towards the tea plantations. Policies like the Charter Act of 1833 had further struck the traditional crafts adversely and as a result the occupational structure underwent considerable change.

Although the methods of production were very simple and limited in scale, indigenous crafts had provided occupation to a large section of the population during the Ahom rule. But after the British annexation of the province in 1826, important industries like gold and silver-washing, iron-smelting, salt manufacturing etc. started declining. By the time a systematic census started (in 1872) the composition of artisanal population had changed a great deal. Persons belonging to certain artisanal groups presumably turned to full-time agricultural occupations while others combined agriculture with other crafts for livelihood.

Lack of investment on the part of the government as well as the private capitalists also contributed towards the decay of indigenous industries. Although there was a visible expansion of transport network in the region, most of it catered to the needs of the tea planters. This lopsided development of transport deterred investment in the industries. The labour force was channelised towards land despite enhanced taxation, as it was more lucrative and perhaps assured more security than occupations in the tea industry which offered meagre wages to the labourers. Hence it appears that it was not only the scarcity of labour, as also the low level of wages, which restricted the supply of local labour available to the industrialists. However, the overall impact of all these developments was seemingly less disastrous in the case of the Brahmaputra Valley. It was perhaps the

distinctive factor of still abundant arable land that had neutralised the adverse effects of colonial underdevelopment in the nineteenth century Brahmaputra Valley, small though the extent of such neutralization was.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The administrative divisions referred to in this paper correspond to those prevailing during the period studied and therefore not necessarily to their current divisions.
2. Notable amongst these is A. Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947* (1977). Guha has provided detailed analyses of the various aspects of change in the economic life of the region, focussing particularly on the impact of policies adopted by the Colonial Government on important issues of administration. Amongst other works related to the tea plantation in Assam, mention may also be made of R.P. Behl's *Conditions of Labour in Assam Valley Tea Plantations : 1900-1930* (unpublished M.Phil thesis, JNU, 1977).
3. W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, 1841, p. 36.
4. W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam* (London 1879) vol. I, p. 106; William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, 1841, p. 36.
5. Hiteswar Barbarua, 'Ahomar Din' (compiled in 1924) Gauhati 1981, pp. 455-458. See also 'Native Account of Washing for Gold in Assam', by Moniram Dewan in *JASB*, vol. 7, 1838, pp. 621-25.
6. From 'Capt. Hannay's Communication to Capt. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General in Assam', *JASB*, vol. 7, pp. 625-28.
7. H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p. 457.
8. Cited in Amalendu Guha, *North-East India: Polity, Society and Economy, 1200-1750*, CASSC, Occasional paper no. 19, August 1978, p. 24.
9. H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p. 458.
10. The price for a seer of iron is referred to have been 1 anna during the Ahom rule. H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p. 464-6.
11. *Ibid*, p. 466.
12. A. Guha, 1978, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25; see also H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p. 471.
13. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam* (First compiled between 1807-1814, ed. by S.K. Bhuyan) Gauhati, 1940, p. 47.
14. H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, pp. 450-51.
15. E.A. Gait, 'Brass and Copper Wares in Assam' 1984 in *Notes on Some Industries of Assam from 1884-1895*, p. 113.
16. The main articles manufactured were *Gajera* (necklace): Rs. 80 to Rs. 100; *Thuria* (ear-rings): around Rs. 140; *Keru* (smaller ear-rings): Rs. 40; and *Biri* and *Duddugi* (loketts): ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 100, H.Z. Darrah, 1884-85, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
17. F. Hamilton, *op.cit.*, p. 60, and H. Barbarua, *op.cit.*, p. 469.
18. *An Accnount of the Province of Assam*, Assam Secretariat, Shillong, 1903, p. 47.
19. E.A. Gait, 'Pottery in Assam', in *Notes on Some Industries of Assam 1884-85*, *op.cit.*, pp. 126-29.
20. W. Robinson, *op.cit.*, pp. 231-2.
21. *Ibid*.
22. From Chapter VI of Robinson's Report, cited in W.W. Hunter, *op.cit.*, vol. I, pp. 140-41.
23. The articles usually coloured with lac dye were cotton clothes and thread and other materials of silk like *muga*, *eri* etc. B.C. Basu, *Note on the Lac Industry of Assam*, Agricultural Department, Industrial Series No. 6, 1905, p. 10.
24. *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.
25. S. Bhattacharya, 'Industrial Production, Technology and Market Structure in Eastern India, 1757-1857', in *Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. II, Chapter IV.

26. In the primary level of organisation the nature of production is dispersed and essentially within the domestic unit involving minimum division of labour. In the second level of organisation in order to secure regularity of supply and specification of goods the middleman advances cash to the artisan. In the third level expansion of the work group takes place; artisans other than family members are included and more than one middleman mediates in advance in procurement and marketing of the produce. Referred in, S. Bhattacharya's article on 'Eastern India' in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 2 c1757-c1970 (ed. Dharma Kumar) pp. 283-284.
27. *Ibid.*
28. T. Hugon, *op.cit.*, p. 23.
29. It has been observed, a farmer in Darrang district received about 38 to 56 per cent of the export value of lac, mustard and muga silk in 1833. A. Guha, 1968, *op.cit.*, p. 132.
30. B.C. Allen, *Industrial Monograph of Assam*, *op.cit.*, p. 1.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
32. *Census of India*, 1872, Chapter V, pp. cxxxviii-cx1.
33. David Scott had recommended a policy of encouraging technical training in preference to the general education which, however, was turned down by the authority.
34. The cost of plantation of some 330 acres and of distribution of 500 modern reels was estimated at 12,000 to 15,000 sicca rupees around the 1830s—a small amount in comparison to the revenue earned. A. Guha, 1968, *op.cit.*, p. 136.
35. The depury commissioner of Lakhimpur district estimated that *eri* clothes worth Rs. 7,000 was purchased annually by the hill tribes to the north and north-east of Sadiya and the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup stated that in that district about 500 mds of silk were taken in 1898-99 by the Bhutiyas and about 1,500 mds exported to Bengal and that the price of *eri* cocoons ranged from Rs. 5 to Rs. 2 in different parts of the district depending on the quality. *Monograph on Silk Clothes of Assam*, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
36. E. Stack, 1884, 'Silk in Assam', in *Notes on Some Industries of Assam, 1884-1895*, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Imperial Gazetteer*, Assam, 1906, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
40. B.C. Basu, 1905, *Note on the Lac Industry of Assam*, *op.cit.*, p.2.
41. Hamilton, 1940, *op.cit.*, p. 59, & John McCosh, *op.cit.*, p. 36.
42. A. Guha, 1968, *op.cit.*, p. 127.
43. Lt. Governor's minute, 13 June 1856, *Bengal Administrative Report*, 1856-57, p. 98. Also *Bengal Administrative Report*, 1859-60, p. 97.
44. *Bengal Administrative Report*, 1856-57, *op.cit.*, p. 96.
45. *Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Report*, 1925, *op.cit.*, p. 18.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Bengal Administrative Report*, 1861-62, p. 19.
49. RAERA 1874-75, p. 4.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
51. *Enquiry Committee Report*, 1888, p. 6.
52. It was only in the year 1905 that Rs. 7,000 was returned by export of opium. *Imperial Gazetteer*, Assam, 1905, Table VI, Part II, p. 105.
53. W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol. I and II, *op.cit.*, 1876.
54. H.T. Bernstein, *Steam Boats on the Ganges: An Exploration in the History of India's Modernization Through Science and Technology*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 37.
55. A. Guha, 1967, *op.cit.*, p. 293.
56. *Report on the river-borne trade of the province of Assam during the year ending 31st March 1881 (Annual)*, p.3.
57. Processed from figures provided by H.Z. Darrah's monograph on 'Cotton in Assam', in *Notes on some Industries of Assam, 1884-1895*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.
58. In 1869 Haribilas took lease of 9 rubber forests from the Government in annual settlement. Though the business proved to be fruitful, it had to be put to a stop due to disputes with the authorities. Thereafter, several times he invested on the

- business but could not take much profit. In 1883, he bought a saw mill from a Mr Martin—proprietor of Balipara-Namgaon Tea Estate, at Rs. 12,000 which was shifted to Tezpur dockyard in 1886 and was finally closed and sold to one Saruram Majumdar in 1893 with the machinery at a mere Rs. 2,500. *Haribilas Agarwala Dangariar Atmajivani*, 1942, pp. 29 and 45. I am indebted to Professor Amalendu Guha for lending me this rare work.
59. During the early phases wages offered to a tea garden labourer ranged from Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 4.00 per month which later on increased to Rs. 5.00. P. Griffiths, *The History of Indian Tea Industry*, London, 1967, p. 304.
  60. W.W. Hunter, *op.cit.*, vol. I, pp. 134, 195, 257, 37; vol. II, p. 63.  
There were about six categories of landless labourers in Goalpara: (1) 'Chakar'—persons regularly engaged as servants, (2) 'Bandhas'—persons paid in advance, with food and clothes, (3) 'Adhiyar'—share-croppers, (4) 'Prajais'—cultivating in other's lands with own implements, (5) 'Chukani'—pay rent and also serve the owners on certain days, (6) 'Chakaran'—instead of rent cultivate additional lands belonging to temples.
  61. It is evident from the Table that in the beginning of the twentieth century the overall proportion of the agricultural labourers was about 14 per cent in Assam. If, however, the plantation workers are 'deleted' from the list the proportion of agricultural labourers would stand at mere 2 per cent. S.J. Patel, *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
  62. *Enquiry Committee Report*, 1888, *op.cit.*, p.4.
  63. P. Griffiths, *op.cit.*, p. 304.
  64. Keya Deb, *Tea Plantation in the Brahmaputra Valley (1839-1914): A Case Study in Colonial Set Up*, 1979 (unpublished), p. 153.
  65. H.A. Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company 1839-1955*, Edinburgh, 1957, p. 389.
  66. *Enquiry Committee Report*, 1888, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
  67. *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Government of Assam, Revenue Department, vol. I, 1970, p. iv.
  68. *Enquiry Committee Report*, 1888, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
  69. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
  70. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
  71. M. Neog, *Sankardeva and His Times*, Gauhati, 1965.
  72. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
  73. M. Dewan, *op.cit.*, p. 621; and H. Barbarua, pp. 458-9.
  74. H. Barbarua, *Ibid.*, p. 462.
  75. F. Hamilton, *Ronggopur Records*, IOR, Book III, p. 102.
  76. F. Hamilton, 1840, *op.cit.*, p. 55.
  77. E.A. Gait, 'Pottery in Assam', 1895, *op.cit.*, p. 112.
  78. *Census of India*, 1881, pp. 93-94.
  79. *C.I.*, 1881, p. 123.
  80. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
  81. Gait, *op.cit.*, p. 112.
  82. *ECR*, 1888, p. 40.
  83. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
  84. *Ibid.*

K.K. ESWARAN\*

## *Reemergence of Land Leasing in Kerala The Case of Kuttanad*

Although the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act 1969 which came into force from January 1970 has brought about radical changes in the agrarian structure in Kerala, the trends that have been emerging in agriculture and land management in recent years present a somewhat different picture. The tendencies like less intensive cropping, leaving of paddy land fallow or shift from paddy to cash crops like coconut or rubber are by and large getting strong. Among such tendencies the more important and striking development is the emergence of a kind of informal or concealed tenancy. This new development of tenancy invites our attention, because any form of tenancy is illegal in post-land reform Kerala.

The reasons for such a tendency can be various. Rising cost of paddy cultivation coupled with the increasing dependence on economic activities outside agriculture seem to force farmers to seek new forms of land management. When the agricultural produce does not fetch a market price corresponding to the costs invested, the farmers find it difficult to realise the benefit of the value they created. It is possible that this problem of realisation prompted the farmers to think in terms of other ways to manage the land. On the other side, it is likely that acute unemployment and land hunger of agricultural labourers, who are largely kept out of the purview of the land reforms, necessitate them to look for possible strategies of survival which in turn has created a ground favourable for the emergence of land leasing.

This paper is an attempt to capture some of the dimensions of this new kind of leasing based on a study conducted in a village in Kuttanad, a major paddy producing region of Kerala. It is argued that this trend signifies the inadequacies and shortfalls of land reform implementation in the State. The analysis also suggests that while land reforms have brought fundamental changes in the earlier agrarian structure of the state they have not been successful in bringing about a

---

\* Research Scholar, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Cochin.



radical redistribution of land in favour of landless agricultural workers. Instead, the beneficiaries of land reforms have been largely the intermediary tenants, a sizeable number of whom were large-scale owner cultivators belonging to upper castes of Hindus and Syrian Christians. A stage has come in Kuttanad where a majority of these earlier tenants (or present, significant land owners) are no more pure agricultural households. It is against this background that the new leasing tendency has emerged which combines in itself the characteristics of both subsistence and commercial farming in a peculiar manner.

Even though tenancy has been legally abolished, oral and unrecorded leases have been reported in many parts of India. Share cropping is still the predominant form of tenancy in the North and East India, while cost sharing and fixed rent tenancies are becoming predominant in the Southern regions of India.<sup>1</sup> It seems that in those areas the existing lease arrangements are largely a continuation of the earlier systems without a noticeable break in between. In Kerala, a few years even before the legal abolition in 1970 tenancy was virtually extinct. Thus the reappearance of tenancy in a new form in Kuttanad is essentially a phenomenon of the 1980s, after a gap of more than ten years. In this period, only owner cultivation was practised there. Even in early times large scale owner cultivation was a characteristic feature of the Kuttanad region. While the present leasing tendency is a reversal to an earlier farming arrangement it has definite deviations from the latter.

In the case of other regions in India cost sharing and fixed rent tenancies are considered as an advancement over the existing share cropping system.<sup>2</sup> It is also maintained that the trend of increased cost-sharing and the larger role of land owners in cultivation may gradually lead to owner cultivation.<sup>3</sup> But this does not appear to be true of Kuttanad, where it is a retreat from owner cultivation that is taking place.

Before taking up a detailed analysis of the emerging trend of land leasing in Kuttanad, it may be useful to give a brief account of the changes that have taken place in land relations in the region before and after the land reform measures initiated in 1970. We also present a description of the general agricultural setting of the region in which both cultivators and agricultural labourers coexist and interact.

#### LAND RELATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFORMS

As in the rest of Travancore the system of land relations that existed in Kuttanad prior to the land reforms of the 1960s was a combination of tenancy system and peasant proprietorship. But alongwith this there was large scale owner cultivation. This could perhaps be a special character of Kuttanad. Large scale owner cultivation came into being in Kuttanad in the wake of reclamations of backwaters for paddy

cultivation. The process of reclamation began in the 1880s continued upto the 1940s. Although tenancy existed in this reclaimed areas, the bulk of the land was cultivated by the proprietors who reclaimed it, or their successors. Reclamation thus led to an unprecedented land concentration in Kuttanad. There were even very large farmers cultivating hundreds of acres of owned, paddy lands by directly employing hired labour in the reclaimed *Kayal* (Lake) zone.

In the regions other than Kayal areas in Kuttanad, tenancy was more a rule rather than an exception.<sup>4</sup> Superior ownership rights on land called *Janmam* rights were held by the temple authorities, Brahmins and other caste Hindus like Nairs. In Kuttanad lands were mostly leased out to upper caste Hindus like Nairs and Syrian Christians and a segment of these tenants were themselves owners of land. Traditionally there existed a protected land market in which the privilege of leasing-in land was restricted to the above communities.

The members of the scheduled castes and backward communities, the actual tillers of the soil, were practically forbidden from leasing-in land through the discriminating provisions of the caste system. But the manual work in the leased-out lands was mostly carried out by Pulayas and Ezhavas who were at the lowest rung of the social ladder. They were attached to the employer tenants and landlords in many ways.<sup>5</sup>

The system of land relations described above had been drastically altered by the land reforms measures. The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1969 abolished tenancy in the State. Creation of new tenancies was also banned. The Act provided for confirmment of ownership rights on leased-in land to tenants and it gave the landless hutment dwellers (*Kudikidappukar*) not only fixity of tenure but the right to purchase ten cents of land at a nominal price. The Act also put a ceiling on land holdings to 20 acres for a family of five. But plantations, private forests and lands belonging to religious, charitable and educational institutions were exempted from this ceiling limit.

The provisions relating to abolition of tenancy and confirmment of ownership rights on landless 'hutment dwellers' had been successfully implemented by a coincidence of bureaucratic action and extra parliamentary political action. But the Act (1969) has not been very successful in identifying, taking over, and distributing surplus land above the ceiling limit to the landless.<sup>6</sup>

As elsewhere in the State, in Kuttanad also a new class of tenants turned owners came into existence through obtaining ownership rights on leased-in lands. The largest number of hutment dwellers in the state was in Alleppey District (most of the Kuttanad region falls in this district) and all of them got rights over their homestead land. There has been considerable change in the land holding pattern in Kuttanad after the land reforms.

As pointed out earlier, side by side with tenancy and peasant proprietorship in Kuttanad there was also owner cultivation on capitalist lines. These large-scale owner cultivators were affected by the land reforms only to the extent that a ceiling was imposed on their holdings.<sup>7</sup> The peasant proprietors were also not affected, but the rentier land owning class was completely eliminated. The old tenants who were mostly upper caste Hindus and Syrian Christians became owners of their leased-in lands.<sup>8</sup> This offered them ample scope to convert farming into a profitable enterprise.

The actual agricultural labourers, mostly people belonging to Pulaya and other depressed communities, were by and large kept off the benefits of land reforms except for the fact that they were given ownership right over their homestead.<sup>9</sup> This is not to deny that a few of the agricultural labourers in Kuttanad had benefited from the distribution of surplus lands.<sup>10</sup>

#### PRESENT AGRARIAN SITUATION IN KUTTANAD

Apart from the consequences emanating from the specific agro-ecological features,<sup>11</sup> farming in Kuttanad is largely influenced by the general conditions of agriculture in the state. Paddy cultivation in Kuttanad and in the State as a whole shows signs of stagnation in terms of production, productivity and area under cultivation. A comparison of prices (both real and money) of inputs and outputs shows that the terms of trade have been unfavourable to the farmers, especially to paddy farmers particularly after the mid-seventies.<sup>12</sup>

A rising trend of paddy price continued upto 1974-75, but was reversed from 1975-76 onwards. On the other hand the cost of production showed a steady increase. The average daily wages of paddy field workers have been continuously on the rise. While the prices of almost all the inputs have been keeping a steady progress the prices of paddy have been largely fluctuating.<sup>13</sup> The index numbers of parity between the prices received and paid by the farmers available with the government sources indicate that prices paid by farmers were in excess of the percentage increase in prices received by farmers during the period 1971-83.<sup>14</sup> This is much more true in the case of paddy cultivators. The increase in the prices of food crops was much smaller, especially in the 1970s than the increase in the price of non-food crops. Among the food crops the lowest increase was noticed in the case of cereals and among the cereals the price increase of paddy was still smaller.<sup>15</sup> The incidence of the adverse terms of trade appears to be greater in the case of Kuttanad farmers particularly in the context of the region's special agro-ecological characteristics which necessitates relatively more expensive cultivational practices. The large farmers may have been able to withstand the adverse situation because of their larger absolute income, even while the rates of returns could have been

low. On the contrary, the middle and small peasants are severely affected by this.

The agricultural labourers form the single biggest group in the total workforce of Kuttanad, that is, nearly 40 per cent of the workforce as against the state average of 31 per cent. Given the fact that about two-thirds of the area of this region consists of paddy fields and most of it is still single cropped, employment scope within agriculture is very much limited. Alternative avenues of employment are almost absent. Therefore, the incidence of unemployment and under-employment is very high in this region. Various studies on the employment and living conditions of agricultural labourers in Kuttanad have shown that the life of this class of people is characterised by very low levels of employment and income and consequent poverty and starvation.<sup>16</sup>

The Kuttanad Enquiry Commission (1971) estimated that a male agricultural worker gets about 100-120 days' work in an year. Over the period there has been a further decline in the availability of employment. Mencher estimated in 1980 that a male worker in Kuttanad got about 73 days' work in an year.<sup>17</sup> The data collected for the present study show an average of 90 days. Allowing for the possible differences in the different estimates of the exact number of days of work, these figures nevertheless, indicate the severity of the under-employment situation of the agricultural labourers in the region.

Although wages have registered a steady increase in the past, the decline in the availability of employment virtually denied the advantage of wage increase to the agricultural labourers. The causes of such a decline in the number of working days are many. Mounting population pressure on agriculture and lack of alternative avenues of employment are a few of those. Lower cropping and labour use intensity are also reasons causing a decline in the availability of employment.

To summarise, the agrarian situation in Kuttanad is characterised by the following features. The land reforms have brought about significant changes in the agrarian social structure. With the decline of tenancy system the former tenants became a new class of owner cultivators. But these reforms did not bring any major change in the land ownership pattern of agricultural labourers. The paddy farming in the region is becoming less attractive in the face of increasing cost of farming and unfavourable price conditions. The level of employment and income of agricultural labourers is low even while there has been a steady increase in wage rates. Keeping these factors in mind, we shall now turn to an analysis of the emerging lease cultivation in Kuttanad.

In order to gather the necessary data for such an analysis, we conducted a field survey in Nedumudi, a typical agrarian village of Kuttanad in 1985-86 agricultural year.<sup>18</sup> The region is fairly advanced in agricultural practices in the sense that the use of high yielding varieties of seeds is nearly total; so also the use of chemical fertilizers. The use of tractors too is widely prevalent.<sup>19</sup> From our investigation it

is found that nearly 240 households in a total number of 2260 paddy land owners in the panchayat (i.e. 11 per cent of the paddy land owners) lease out their paddy lands. The total area leased out by the thirty sample households of lessors comes to 102 acres and the average area leased out is 3.4 acres per household.<sup>20</sup> This particular type of leasing of land in Kuttanad is a phenomenon that emerged in the beginning of this decade.<sup>21</sup> The leasing practised in Kuttanad is an oral informal arrangement between the land owner and the tenant.

In order to bring out the implications of the leasing we have looked into a number of factors such as the land ownership pattern of lessors and lessees, the occupational characteristics of the parties involved, the details of lease contracts etc.

#### LAND OWNERSHIP AND LEASING PATTERN OF LESSORS AND LESSEES

The land ownership pattern of the sample lessor households shows that (see Table I) about 53 per cent of them possess an area of less than five acres each and 47 per cent about five acres. Those who own less than five acres together hold a little over 20 per cent of the total area of land and the remaining nearly 80 per cent is held by those who own more than five acres. It is also seen that 13 per cent of the households falling in the category of 10 acres and above own a little over 32 per cent of the total land. Looking at the area leased out by households in each size-group, (see Table 1 Col. 6 and 7), we see that 26.7 per cent of the households that belong to the lowest size-group account for seven per cent of the total leased-out area, but the households that belong to the 2-5 acre size-group who also account for 26.7 per cent of the total households leased out as much as 16.8 per cent of the area. These two groups together form more than 53 per cent of the total households, but account for only about 24 per cent of the leased-out area. A little over 76 per cent of the total leased-out area belongs to 47 per cent of the households that come in the relatively large size groups of 5 acres and above. It follows from the above analysis that the bulk of the leased out land is contributed by the large land-owners.

The land holding pattern of those who leased in land presents an altogether different picture (see Table II). Eighteen out of a total number of thirty lessee households (60 per cent) own nearly seven per cent of the total land owned by all lessee households or an average of six cents (i.e. 0.06 acre) per household. Another 10 per cent of the household belong to the size group of 11-20 cents. The top ten per cent of the households possess a little over 65 per cent of the total area. It may be noted that 13 of the total 30 sample households which represent the tail end of the distribution secured their tiny holdings by virtue of their right over *Kudikidappu* land conferred by the provisions of the Land Reforms Act 1969.

The data on land leased-in by various households show that (see column 6 and 7 of Table II) the small holders have a higher share in

the total area leased-in than the larger holders. It is those who hold less than 10 cents have the largest share in the leased-in area, i.e. 43 per cent. These small holders constitute 60 per cent of the sample lessee households. Nearly 77 per cent of the households owning less than 50 cents of land have leased in a little over 72 per cent of the total leased-in area.

As indicated earlier only paddy lands generally enter the lease market in Kuttanad. A large majority of the lessees do not possess any paddy land. As is seen from the survey data, 80 per cent of the lessees do not own any paddy land; what they own is tiny plots of garden lands which they obtained by virtue of land reforms. A further disaggregation shows that a majority of such households, i.e. 60 per cent of the total, own homesteads of the size of 10 cents and below. So it is evident that their income from land is either zero or insignificant. They derive their sustenance mainly from wage employment in agriculture. This implies that these households are virtually landless agricultural labourers. The remaining 20 per cent own some paddy land but the extent of their holding is not very significant. Thus from the above analysis, it is evident that it is either the landless or very small holders who largely come forward to lease in land.

#### INCOME AND OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LESSORS AND LESSEES

An occupational break-up of the lessor households shows that the main occupation (defined in terms of the major source of income) of a majority of them is non-agricultural; while 43 per cent of the households are engaged in agriculture, 57 per cent of them have various non-agricultural occupations as their main source of income<sup>22</sup> (see Table III). This shows that a majority of the landholders are not farmers in the strict sense of the term.

A further classification of lessor households revealed that 75 per cent of those who own below five acres have occupations other than agriculture, of which a majority have regular salaried jobs. It was found that the income of those having salaried jobs was comparatively higher than that of an average Kuttanad farmer. Thus it is the large land owners and relatively higher income households who constitute the majority of lessors.

Coming to the occupational break-up of the lessee households, 60 per cent of them belong to the category of agricultural labour (see Table III). Nearly seven per cent of the tenant households have agriculture as their main occupation; in addition to leased-in land they have their own paddy land too. While 10 per cent of the households are engaged in petty business, the agricultural labour households and those engaged in other casual manual labour together form 70 per cent of the tenants. Further, a large majority of the households that belong to the non-agricultural labour category also is found to be offering themselves as agricultural labourers to earn a subsidiary income. About 90 per cent of

the tenants found to be contributing family labour to the cultivation of leased in land. Thus we see from the above analysis that majority of tenants are agricultural labourers and those who are not predominantly agricultural labourers also contribute their family labour to leased-in farms. This is to be seen in the context of declining availability of employment in the farming sector and absence of job opportunities outside agriculture.

A look at the levels of earnings of both the lessors and lessees reveals that the average annual income from all sources of a lessor household works out to Rs. 19,503 and that of a tenant household Rs. 7631. The average income of tenant household in Kuttanad is lower than the average household income in the state as a whole and still lower in comparison with the income of the lessors.<sup>23</sup> The income levels seem to be positively correlated with size of holdings. The average annual income of households having five acres of land and above is substantially high. The share of rent (received from leased out land) in their total income is also significant. The income from agriculture (i.e. from own cultivation of paddy land and garden land) and rent together form a little over 42 per cent of the total income of the lessor households; nearly 58 per cent of the income originates from sources other than agriculture. That is, the non-agricultural incomes of the lessor households are quite substantial.

The average income of a tenant household, on the contrary, is Rs. 7631 per annum. Among the tenants the agricultural labour households constitute the lowest income group whose average income is estimated at Rs. 4,507. This income also includes the income from leased-in forms. Those tenants who engage in some regular jobs, in addition to lease farming, are found to be having the highest income among the tenant households. But, even their incomes are considerably lower than the incomes of lessor households. This illustrates the fact that a majority of the tenants lease in land because of their lower earnings and a high degree of under-employment as we shall see below. We have seen that a majority of the non-agricultural labour households resorts to leasing in order to earn a subsidiary means of living. Thus, the under-employment and unemployment in the region provides a favourable ground for the reappearance of tenancy in Kuttanad. As Bardhan points out, in a different context, the larger the extent of unemployment in wage labour market, the higher is the extent of tenancy.<sup>24</sup>

#### TERMS AND FEATURES OF LEASING

A marked feature of present land leasing arrangement in Kuttanad is that it is almost entirely different from that of the pre-land reform period. Unlike in the earlier days when land was generally leased out to a tenant once for all, under the present system land is leased out for a strictly short-term period of one or two crops only. Even when the same tenant is given the land for a second crop the lease contract is a fresh

one. The contract here means only an oral agreement. No tenant will be allowed to cultivate for a third time except under very special circumstances. The land owners in the region almost invariably keep on changing the tenants. The rotation of tenants is mainly owing to the land owners' fear of any future claims on the land by the tenants. As far as the terms of renting are concerned it is seen that there is only fixed rent tenancy in the region. The system of share cropping and cost sharing are completely absent in Kuttanad. The rent payment is done either in kind or cash, but a majority of land owners prefer to have cash. Sixty per cent of the lessors take rent in cash and a few households take in both kind and cash where the kind component is meant for their home consumption. It is found that the households taking kind rent account for a considerable marketable surplus after meeting their consumption requirements. However, the available evidence including the information obtained from the tenants, suggests that the predominant form of rent payment is in cash terms. The fixed rent tenancy and the system of cash rent make our case vastly different from tenancy in other areas in India especially North and North-East India.

The cash rent is generally obtained by the lessors before the land is sown and kind rent after the harvest. Nearly 80 per cent of the households who receive cash rent take it in advance. It was found that a majority of the tenants who pay rent in advance mobilise finance for it either by borrowing or pledging their little gold ornaments in commercial banks.

The terms of rent are not uniform in the village; depending on the differences in fertility of the soil, location of the farms and the relative bargaining ability of the land owners, the rents are found to vary. The average cash rent received per acre is, generally, Rs. 880 and kind rent 60 paras (360 kilograms) of paddy. When the kind rent is converted to value terms using the market price of paddy it is about Rs. 720 per acre. The above rate is obtained from the information supplied by the lessors. But the information collected from the tenants shows a higher rent; that is Rs. 911 if in cash terms and 375 kilograms of paddy worth Rs. 750 in kind. As the difference is not very substantial, it need not detain us here. However, it should be noted that there is a significant difference between cash and kind rents.

Considering an average yield rate of 1500 kilograms of paddy per acre in the region, the average cash rent comes to about 30 per cent of the gross produce, while the average kind rent is only 25 per cent of the gross produce. As cash rent is generally advanced at the beginning, i.e. about five months before the harvest, the difference between the cash rent and kind rent becomes still higher when the implicit rate of interest is considered. Thus, when we add an amount equivalent to the interest at 12 per cent per annum for five months to the cash rent it increases by about Rs. 45 per acre.<sup>25</sup> The reason for the predominance of



cash rent may be its possibility of being collected well in advance of farming operations, and the implicit interest it may fetch for the period stretching over the preparation of the field to harvesting. Further, it eliminates the risk factor in the event of a crop failure. In any case, the above rent, whether in cash or kind, is substantially high compared to tenant's farm income, which will be discussed later.

Unlike in many other parts of India the terms and conditions of tenancy found in Kuttanad show that the relation between land owners and tenants is not one of dominance and dependence. The freedom of the tenant to enter the lease market is in no way restricted. Of course, his ability to raise funds for cultivation is a constraint. Once the land is leased in, the tenant is at liberty to take decisions regarding cultivation, marketing of the product and such other matters. The tenant can lease in land from more than one land owner at a time, if he wishes so. We have not noted any extra economic coercion or obligatory services or gifts to the land owner, typical of the pre-land reform tenancy. Similarly, as seen in the North Eastern part of India interlocking of various markets by the land owners is also absent in Kuttanad.

Though in the past, the privilege to lease in land in Kuttanad was limited to upper caste Hindus and Syrian Christians, now there is no such restriction. As is evident from the survey data nearly 35 per cent of the tenants are Ezhavas (a backward caste), 13 per cent other low caste Hindus, and the rest caste Hindus and Christians. The lessors are mostly upper caste Hindus and Christians. It is significant that a majority of the Christian and upper caste Hindu lessors were tenants in the pre-land reform period.

Although we do not have sufficient data to make a comparative study between the tenancy of the pre-land reform period and the present one in Kuttanad, an indication of the differences and similarities between the two may be in order. The physical participation of the tenants in the pre-land reform period in farm operations was relatively insignificant. But the family labour contribution of the present tenants, including the Syrian Christians and Nairs, is substantially high. The available fragmentary evidence shows that in pre-land reform period there was considerable extra economic coercion exercised by landlords over tenants and agricultural labourers.<sup>26</sup> Tenants were also exercising such controls and authority over agricultural labourers. The economic status of the erstwhile tenants might have been higher than that of the present tenants as the former belonged to the upper castes and a sizeable number of them were owner cultivators too. Regarding the security of tenure the position of the present tenants seems to be much worse. In both situations, that is earlier and now, the land lease market is essentially controlled by land owners. Similarly, as discussed above, the rates of rent seem to be very high in both.

## COST OF PRODUCTION AND INCOMES OF OWN AND TENANT CULTIVATION

For a meaningful comparison of own and tenant cultivation in terms of cost and return, we have taken the cost of cultivation of those lessor households who cultivate a portion of their land on their own.<sup>27</sup> Also we have taken only one crop (i.e. first crop, *Punja*) into account for the purpose. In our sample only a few of the tenants and lessors raised a second crop during the period and most of them lost the crop by the middle of the cropping period due to floods.

The cost of production<sup>28</sup> per acre in own cultivation including the interest on working capital is Rs. 2145 and the gross production of paddy per acre is 247.7 *paras* (1486 kilograms), which in money terms is Rs. 2972, giving a net return of Rs. 826 per acre (see Table IV). If we add the value of straw (a by-product), which is Rs. 225 per acre, to the above figure of Rs. 826 we get a total net return of Rs. 1051 per acre. When we deduct the existing average cash rent received by land owners, i.e. Rs. 880, from the above income the net income of the farmer is only Rs. 171. It is not unreasonable to do such an exercise since rent is the opportunity cost of land.

In the above calculation we have not provided for monitoring and supervision costs. If the net income of Rs. 171 is considered as the reward for monitoring and supervision, it is obviously on the low side. The larger land holders and land owners having other sources of income would naturally look for a higher reward for their monitoring and supervision jobs. This is precisely why a majority of them consider rice cultivation unprofitable and hence resort to leasing out their lands. They find it convenient and profitable to do so. Lack of alternative employment opportunities to the under-employed agricultural labourers in the region provide a helpful setting for leasing. The lessors do not have to take the risk of cultivation nor to contribute any labour and can avoid managerial problems of cultivation as well.

Now, we turn to the cost of production and income of tenant cultivation. The total paid out cost (i.e. including rent and excluding family labour cost) per acre in tenant farming is Rs. 2610 (see Table V). The average output per acre is 266 *paras* of paddy (1596 kilograms), the value of which comes to Rs. 3192. When the paid out cost is deducted from the gross value of output, the tenant's income is Rs. 581 per acre. The income of the tenant including the value of the by-product, i.e. straw is Rs. 806. But this income is inclusive of family labour cost. It was found that nearly 36 per cent of the total labour days was contributed by the family labour of the tenant households. If for analytical purposes, the imputed value of family labour is also deducted from the cost of production already calculated, the net income of the tenant is Rs. 339 per acre.<sup>29</sup>

When comparing the cost of cultivation and income of tenant farming with that of own cultivation of lessors we see that tenant's position is a little better in terms of absolute income. While the tenant earns a net

income (after deducting the cost of family labour) of Rs. 339 the lessor gets only Rs. 171. This difference is mainly due to the higher output per acre in the tenant farm (248 and 266 *paras* of paddy per acre in own farm and tenant farm respectively). When the imputed cost of family labour is not considered the net return of the tenant becomes larger. Even when the cost of family labour is not included it is not only the cost per unit of land, but also cost per unit of output that is higher in tenant farming than that in own cultivation.<sup>30</sup> Hence higher productivity per acre need not necessarily be considered the result of higher efficiency of tenant farms, rather it is largely the result of the farmer's 'self-exploitation'. As Utsa Patnaik points out, in a different context, this shows the economic weakness of small peasants rather than the efficiency of small farms.<sup>31</sup>

Before we conclude, mention may be made of the risk factor of cultivation, which is greater in the case of Kuttanad compared to other regions in the State. It, as we shall argue, has a significant bearing on the emergence of land lease market in Kuttanad in recent years. The land owners who lease out lands do not generally share the loss in case of crop damages due to floods or otherwise. They at the most condone the rent that may accrue from the land. When land owner himself cultivates the land, he has to bear the entire loss in the event of a crop failure. On the contrary, if he leases out land, he does not incur any loss under such a situation. The significance of this line of reasoning increases once we view this against the background that the cost of cultivation is not usually shared by the tenant and landlord in Kuttanad. Therefore, it is arguable that by leasing out land the land owner is minimising his loss. This perhaps offers a partial explanation for fixed rent tenancy in the region. By default, this arrangement is advantageous to the tenant as well. If the tenant is willing to take risk, he has an opportunity to reap the benefits of a higher output as the rent to be paid is a fixed amount and not a share of the produce.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that in Kuttanad we have a situation where relatively large land holders and higher income groups resort to land leasing as a means to keep their income from land at a reasonable level, while the landless and unemployed rural households find leasing in land as a survival strategy. The economic features of the tenant cultivation sufficiently indicate that this is subsistence farming signifying a stage of stagnation in agriculture. The emerging system of land leasing will certainly have consequences on the trade union movements of agricultural labourers and peasants in the region, which lies outside the scope of the present study.

Table I  
Distribution of Owned and Leased Out Land of Lessor Households by Size:  
Nedumudi Panchayat

<i>Size of Holding (in Acres)</i>	<i>No. of house-holds</i>	<i>Percentage of house-holds</i>	<i>Total area (Acres)</i>	<i>Percentage of total area</i>	<i>Area Leased out (Acres)</i>	<i>Percentage of leased out area</i>
Less than 2	8	26.7	9.57	6.2	7.11	7.0
2-5	8	26.7	21.95	14.3	17.15	16.8
5-10	10	33.3	72.74	47.2	43.70	42.9
10-15	3	10.0	34.30	22.3	24.00	23.5
15 and above	1	3.0	15.50	10.0	10.00	9.8
All	30	100.0	154.06	100.0	101.96	100.0

Source: Survey data

Table II  
Distribution of Owned and Leased-in Land of Lessee Households by size:  
Nedumudi Panchayat

<i>Size of Holding (in acres)</i>	<i>No. of house-holds</i>	<i>Percentage of house-holds</i>	<i>Total area (Acres)</i>	<i>Percentage of area</i>	<i>Area leased in (Acres)</i>	<i>Percentage of leased-in area</i>
0.01-0.10	18	60.0	1.11	6.9	30.55	42.1
0.11-0.20	3	10.0	0.46	2.9	9.40	13.0
0.21-0.50	2	6.7	0.69	4.3	12.50	17.3
0.51-1.00	3	10.0	2.22	13.9	9.00	12.4
1.01-2.00	1	3.3	1.07	6.7	1.60	2.2
2.01-5.00	3	10.0	10.45	65.3	9.50	13.0
All	30	100.0	16.00	100.0	72.55	100.0

Source: Survey data

Table III  
Distribution of Lessor and Lessee Households according to Main Occupation:  
Nedumudi Panchayat

Main Occupation	Percentage of Households	
	Lessor	Lessee
Agriculture*	43.0	6.7
Agricultural labour	—	60.0
All agriculture	43.0	66.7
Salaried employment	37.0	13.3
Business	3.3	10.0
Moneylending	3.3	—
Pensioners	6.6	—
Other casual labour	6.6	10.0
All non-agriculture	57.0	33.3
All	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey Data

\* Includes households mainly dependent on rental income.

Table IV  
Cost and Return of Own Cultivation of Paddy per Acre

1.	Gross production in quantity (kilogram)	1486.00
2.	Gross production (in rupees)	2972.00
3.	Cost of production (in Rs. )	2145.35
4.	Income from paddy (Item 2-3) (Rs. )	826.65
5.	Value of by-product, straw (Rs. )	225.00
6.	Income (Items 4 + 5) (Rs. )	1051.65
7.	Rent (Rs. )	880.00
8.	Net Income (item 6-7) (Rs. )	171.65

Source: Survey data.

Table V  
Cost and Return of Tenant Cultivation of Paddy per Acre -

1.	Gross production in quantity (kilograms)	1596.00
2.	Gross production (in rupees)	3192.00
3.	Cost of production (paid out cost only) (in rupees)	2610.48
4.	Income from paddy (item 2-3) (in Rs. )	581.52
5.	Value of by-product, straw (in Rs. )	225.00
6.	Income (item 4+5) (in Rs. )	806.52
7.	Imputed value of family labour (in Rs. )	467.40
8.	Net income (item 6-7) (in Rs. )	339.12

Source: Survey data.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

This paper is a revised version of a part of the M.Phil dissertation submitted to Cochin University of Science and Technology. An earlier version of this was read at the A.K.G. Centre for Studies and Research, Trivandrum. I am very much grateful to M.K. Sukumaran Nair and P.K. Michael Tharakan for detailed discussions and useful comments on earlier drafts. I have also benefited from discussions with T.M. Thomas Issac.

1. See Pranab Bardhan, 'Variations in Extent and Forms of Agricultural Tenancy: Analysis of Indian Data across Regions and Overtime', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11 and 18 September, 1976.
2. See Asok Rudra, 'Organisation of Agriculture of Rural Development: The Indian Case' in Dharam Ghai *et. al.* (eds), *Agrarian Systems and Rural Development*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London 1979.
3. Pranab Bardhan (1976), *op. cit.* See also Clive Bell, 'Ideology and Economic Interests in Land Reform', in David Legman, (ed), *Peasants, Landlords and Government*, Homes and Meier Publishers Inc., New York, 1974.
4. See V.R. Pillai and P.G.K. Panikar, *Land Reclamation in Kerala*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965.
5. See Thakazhy Sivasankara Pillai, 'Ormayude Theerangalil', *The Mathrubhumi Weekly* (Malayalam), Various issues, Vol. 61 and 62, 1984. See also A.V. Jose, 'Origins of Trade Unionism Among the Agricultural Labourers in Kerala', *Social Scientist*, July 1977.
6. The total surplus land identified by the Land Board and available for take over by 1984 was only a little over 52000 hectares which is less than 2.5 per cent of the total operating area in the State and less than the estimated surplus land. The estimates of surplus land are conflicting and if go through the official records there may not be much surplus land. But these records take for granted all benami records fabricated to circumvent ceiling laws. According to an estimate of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) the total surplus land in the state should be about twelve lakh acres. For a detailed discussion on this issue see K.N. Raj and Michael Tharakan 'Agrarian Reform in Kerala and its Impact on the Rural Economy—An Assessment', *W.E.P. Working Paper*, 1981.
7. This does not mean that all the surplus lands above the ceiling limit have been taken over and distributed. There is evidence to believe that atleast a few large farmers in Kuttanad are keeping undeclared surplus lands with titles in various benami names. There have been cases of Land Board officials and political party nominees to the Land Board allegedly helped landlords to get legal sanctity for their manipulations. It should also be noted that recently in Kuttanad there have been attempts to convert paddy lands into rubber plantations. Since cultivation of rubber is not a viable proposition in this waterlogged region the strategy of big land owners seems to be that if rubber is planted those land will become outside the purview of the Land Reforms Act and thereby the illegal holdings become legalised.
8. Here it should be noted that many of the earlier big tenants who were cultivating more lands than the permissible limit were able to retain those surplus lands through various evasive methods.
9. For a detailed analysis of how land reforms of the 1960s not brought out any serious redistribution of land in favour of agricultural labourers in Kerala, see Ronald J. Herring, *Land to the Tiller*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1983, Chapter 7. Also Joan P. Mencher, 'Agrarian Relations in Two Rice Regions of Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, February, 1978.
10. It is estimated that nearly 2000 agricultural labourers in the Kuttanad region were distributed surplus lands which comes about 200 acres in area. Out of this nearly 1500 acres (in Kayal area) were taken over from just a single landlord.
11. Kuttanad is one of the environmentally handicapped and resource rich regions in the State on account of its singular geographic location. The region is subject to flood submergence during the monsoons, saline intrusion during summer and suffering from lack of enough communication. These special features of the region have certain consequences like higher cost of cultivation and special cultivational

- practices. For details, see K.K. Eswaran Namboodiri, 'Emerging Trends in Agriculture and Land Management in Kuttanad', unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Cochin University of Science and Technology, 1986.
12. For detailed information see M.V. George, 'Recent Trends in Production and Productivity in Kerala Agriculture', in M.A. Oommen (ed.), *Kerala Economy since Independence*, Oxford and IBH, New Delhi, 1979. Also P.G.K. Panikar, 'Recent Trends in the Area under and Production of Rice in Kerala', Working Paper 116, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum (Mimeo). Also P.S. George, 'Agricultural Price Movements in Kerala', in P.P. Pillai (ed), *Agricultural Development in Kerala*, Agricole Publishing Academy, New Delhi, 1982.
  13. In the case of fertilizers, the price of nitrogen showed a decline for four years from 1975-76 but later with 1980 its price also began to increase steadily. The prices of phosphate and potash also have been increasing. The prices of insecticides were more than doubled during the period 1970-78.
  14. According to the Kerala State Planning Board data during this period farm cultivation cost increased by 194 per cent, the prices paid by farmers by 178 per cent and the prices received by farmers by 174 per cent.
  15. For a detailed discussion on the relative price position of paddy and other agricultural commodities see P.S. George, *op.cit.*
  16. See Government of Kerala, *Kuttanad Enquiry Commission Report*, Trivandrum, 1971. Also P.G.K. Panikar, 'Employment Income and Food Intake Among Selected Agricultural Labour Households', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August, 1978.
  17. Joan P. Mencher, 'The Lessons and Non-lessons of Kerala: Agricultural Labourers and Poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, October 1980, p. 1783.
  18. A list of households which leased out and leased in land was prepared with the help of panchayat members, knowledgeable farmers and agricultural labour union and peasant organisations. From this list 30 households each of lessors and lessees were taken on a random basis for the study.
  19. Anywhere in Kuttanad only half of the tilling operations are done by tractors and the rest by ploughmen with animal labour. This is because of the insistence of trade unions.
  20. With this average perhaps one can crudely estimate that about 816 acres in a total paddy area of 4289 acres (i.e. 20 per cent) in the panchayat are leased out during the period 1984-85 crop year.
  21. Note that out of the 30 sample lessor households two have been leasing out paddy lands continuously from 1981 onwards, ten have been leasing out from 1982 onwards and seven from 1983 onwards.
  22. Note that in Table III we see nearly seven per cent of the lessor households belong to casual wage labour group. These two households got paddy land (49 and 100 cents each) under the surplus land distribution scheme which they leased out for advance cash rent for two crops for the simple reason that they were not in a position to invest that year and they needed a lumpsum money. The point, however, needs mention is that this kind of leasing or other types of alienation of land from the beneficiaries of land reforms, although on a smaller scale, are occurring in the region. The main reason for this must be lack of any follow-up action to the land reform measures. But this issue needs to be studied in detail.
  23. The average household income in Kerala in 1984-85 worked out to nearly Rs. 12700 and per capita income Rs. 2196.
  24. See Pranab K. Bardhan, *Land, Labour and Rural Poverty*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1984, p. 135.
  25. This is a very generous estimate. The interest rates charged by the local money lenders range from 36 per cent to 60 per cent. The tenants who cannot take loans on the security of leased-in land, largely depend on the local money lenders. On such cases the implicit rate of rent goes up again.
  26. See Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, *op. cit.*
  27. The difficulties faced in calculating the cost of production in agriculture are rather well known. We have tried to overcome the difficulties to the extent possible. Separate calculations with and without imputing rent in the cost of own cultivation were made. Similarly, cost has been calculated with and without the

value of family labour. But rent is included, as it should be, in the cost of tenant cultivation.

28. The cost of production here means the sum of the value of seed, fertilizers, charges on implements and wages for hired labour. In short, all the paid out costs. There was no family labour contribution in the own cultivation of lessors.
29. We have imputed value only to accountable family labour. The unaccountable labour and careful supervision are beyond our estimates.
30. The cost of production of one *para* of paddy, without family labour cost, of tenant farmer is Rs. 9.81 and with family labour cost is Rs. 11.86, while it is only Rs. 8.66 in the case of owner cultivator.
31. See Utsa Patnaik, 'Development of Capitalism in Agriculture', *Social Scientist*, September 1972, p. 21.



B.R. SHYAMALA DEVI\*

*Integration of Lambadas as Gangmen on the Railways in A.P., a Study with reference to Poosala thanda of Dornakal District Warangal*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Under the British regime the colonisers and Christian missionaries, being one, had a common aim in exploiting the poor people of India through the instrument of religious propaganda and in the name of developing the economy, two objectives which went hand in hand. For this, they tried their best to develop communications by advancing transport facilities to promote their own interest of extracting raw materials and flooding the home market with manufactured goods.

From its beginnings in 1853 India's railway system expanded rapidly to become by 1910 the fourth largest in the world. This net-work which covered most of the subcontinent, radically altered India's transport system.' 'So sure' was the Government of India that railways were a necessity for the effective political and military control of India and for economic development that it did not seriously consider encouraging or undertaking significant alternative investments.

In the 1920s the Hyderabad-Madras railway line was expanded, comparatively late in Telangana region compared to other regions. With this construction of railways, missionaries also moved to construct Christian schools, hospitals and colonies at as many places as possible in Telangana area. This had an impact on the 'Wanderers' or 'Banjaras' (who were frequent migrants) who are called Lambadas now in Telangana. They had been approached by both Christian missionaries and Government agencies for construction work in railways and buildings in several parts of Telangana. In Dornakal, one of the best and biggest cathedrals had been constructed by missionaries in mid 1920s, simultaneously with expansion of railway tracks in the same vicinity. In this process most of the non-tribal poor supplied cheap

\* Reader, Dept. of Economics, University Arts & Science College, Subedari, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. ●

labour power both for construction of buildings and railways under private contractors as well as railway contractors under the public sector.

#### NATURE OF THE EMPLOYMENT

Initially when work was offered in railways both on temporary basis and permanent basis, the poor people of tribal and non-tribal communities had not accepted. The following reasons were important for the Lambadaas of Poosala thanda: Firstly, they were worried about their health and personal security since this was an unfamiliar occupation which involved living in the heart of the forest which had to be cleared and where tracks had to be laid. There was a lack of provisions for security and communications were poor. Secondly, although they were offered railway quarters to live in nearby railway tracks, they preferred to stay within their own milieu and their own social groups rather than living with non-tribes in remote forest locations.

However in the 1930s 3 men from Poosala thanda with many others from various thandas nearby Dornakal finally accepted work as gangmen. At that time to become a gangman one did not require any previous training or skills, for it was mainly an unskilled, laborious job. As the years passed it was apparent that the standard of living of these few gangmen families in comparison with other families was comparatively much better because the gangmen could avail of the opportunities provided by the railways, (like schools, hospitals, quarters, regular monthly salary and free passes to move around in trains).

Gradually this difference operated to change the initial perceptions of the gangmen's own relatives as well as the cultivators and labourers in nearby villages, who now tried to get in touch with gangmen and made enquiries about the possibilities to find employment in the railways. Both the tribals and non-tribals were attracted by the assured income provided as compared to the low and uncertain income they obtained. Thus there was a heavy rush to work in railways. Becoming aware of this fact, senior gangmen, maistrees, contractors and engineers started capitalising on the issue and started operating at their own individual level as well in groups for recruiting new labour. Railway department officials and other operators developed their own 'cuts', or system of shares which have to be paid to them in order to get a new entry into the railways as a gangman. This illegality has become so common that it is de facto legalized and is viewed as a right by these officials and middlemen. Every one has a cut share according to the rank in the hierarchy.

Many Lambadas from different places joined as gangmen out of which 22 families joined from Poosala thanda. The reasons for the rush

to work as gangmen in the railways are mainly as follows according to respondents.

More than 80 per cent of the residents of Poosala thanda are still landless agricultural labourers, who depend on seasonal work and remain unemployed in the slack season or depend upon the few opportunities for non-agricultural work in rural and urban areas. Since most land holders do not have enough resources to invest in inputs to increase land productivity, they also get rather low and fluctuating incomes and find it attractive to become gangmen. As is evident from the detailed earnings data, there is a significant difference in the earnings of even the better-off cultivators and the Railway gangmen.

To these material causes should be added the demonstration effect of urban expenditure patterns, leading to changes in the consumption pattern, food habits, marriages and other customs, especially among those who are influenced by urban Hindu society. Furthermore, facilities are provided by the railways for schools, hospitals, and *pukka* living quarters, which also entail a change in the pattern of living.

Mobility from one place to other place has decreased compared to what used to be the case earlier. At present, because at all places gangmen were appointed simultaneously with the development of railways tracks, they are assured of settling at one place. However, they are also given free passes to move around in certain localities. Once in a year they are given family passes to move around in India. Gangmen with contacts and a good reputation with higher authorities are given passes whenever they are in need; and bribes are also entertained at local levels in order to obtain passes.

These various benefits induced a rush for railway jobs among the tribal and non-tribal poor. This naturally included those in Poosala thanda since this is well located, only 2 kms. from Dornakal Junction. Nonetheless we find that the poorest Lambada who are most in need of job security, find it very difficult, indeed impossible to become gangmen. Some minimum resources are needed owing to the system of bribes and cuts, which becomes a barrier to entry. This is evident from a look at the process through which a typical Lambada is recruited as gangman: Firstly one has to have contact with one of the permanent employees of railways department, working already as gangman or maistree. This provides the information regarding temporary and permanent vacancies. Once the nature of the job is known, then the amount to be paid is decided. Payment may be either by cash or in kind or both. The amount varies from one place to the other but locally the rates are given respectively, for a permanent gangman and a temporary one. Obviously for a temporary gangman the amount demanded is less than for the permanent post. In many cases the job starts on a temporary basis, there is likely to become permanent depending on the capacity of payment to the contractors who keep the recruits on the waiting list. In

exceptional cases (i.e. with the necessary financial capacity) one can also become permanent by payment at one stroke.

The bribe money is raised in varying ways according to persons and location, and the amount differs by area as well. For temporary gangmen currently Rs 10,000 is demanded while to become permanent, an additional Rs 15,000 is paid. Rates as such are not fixed but generally these rates prevail despite the supposed illegality and secrecy.

Peasants with land who wish to become gangmen are forced to sell either part or the whole of their lands or to seek loans with high interest by mortgaging their land until the loan is cleared. Many peasants have sold land or lost their lands to mortgagers in order to provide bribes for becoming gangmen.

Table 1 gives the information on some land transactions made in order to obtain the cash for becoming gangmen. In this process, a large number of peasants surrendered other assets (livestock or gold and silver) as well as their land for defaulting on loans, since with high rates of interest the amount payable mounts year by year. The bribe conditions are strictly enforced. In one case, a person who initially became a temporary gangman by paying part of the money while promising to pay the rest, and subsequently could not pay completely, has been thrown out even after working more than two years in the railways as gangman. He is now working as an ordinary casual labourer.

Those who could not stand the heavy pressure for repayment of loans had to become either attached labourers to their creditors or paupers. Thus pauperisation occurred owing to non-clearance of the initial debts by such households, which have remained indebted. These cases are found especially in Poosala thanda where most are now working as farm servants.

However as we can see from Table 1, in exceptional cases some peasants sold part of land to pay the full bribes, and after some 30 years of service in the railways they are now in a position to purchase land and livestock. They also can give loans to others on interest or mortgage in their land, using their savings. They even run chit funds among themselves in the thanda itself. Details of these exceptional 3 gangmen families are discussed below.

Of the 24 landless gangmen, as many as 23 (or all of them except one) still had debts to be cleared, amounting to a total of Rs 30,350. Some eleven acres of land had been mortgaged and lost by those taking loans in the past thus making them landless. Some 16 out of 24 were still temporary gangmen. This implied that they would have to borrow heavily in the future to pay the bribe for becoming permanent. The three landholding gangmen households had also lost a total of 7 acres land through failure to redeem the mortgage and were still indebted.

## CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

The question may be asked whether it is rational for these Lambada to incur such heavy debts even to the point of losing land and becoming landless, all in order to become gangmen. To answer this we have to look at the employment and earning conditions as gangmen, compared to the traditional alternatives such as agricultural and construction labour on wages. We would expect that the Railways, which forms part of the organised sector and is moreover a government run activity, would provide regular employment. In a situation where unemployment and underemployment is prevalent in the agricultural sector, this factor of regularity and certainty of employment all round the year itself would be a big incentive even for the Lambada with land. Cultivation involves uncertainty and therefore risk, and the Lambada having settled recently in agriculture are not very efficient cultivators. Moreover most are too poor to be able to invest in adequate irrigation, which would help to reduce the uncertainty of output and income.

Table 2 shows the employment and the total and per capita income of the gangmen families from different activities. Other than the head of the families and 2 others engaged as gangmen, other family members who are working are involved and engaged in a range of different activities such as construction labour, agricultural work on wages, and other activities. It is clear that work as a gangman gives a far higher income per capita at Rs 1514.6 per annum, compared to only Rs 78.5 from agricultural wages and Rs 28 from construction wages.

As expected we find that the gangmen obtain employment in the Railways for the entire year the number of (standardised eight-hour) days being 352.5 per worker taking all workers. The permanent workers get one day per week holiday and can take 12 days leave annually, they also work overtime when required. The temporary workers substitute for the permanent workers when they are on leave, in addition to their own normal work. They are required to work a 14 hour day compared to 10 hours for permanent workers, and thus registered employment for 365 days annually compared to 335 in the case of permanent workers (on a standardised day basis). It is this guarantee of full employment which makes the status of gangmen economically attractive compared to cultivation or agricultural labour.

Table 3 shows the households falling in different per capita income groups on different economic activities. It appears that taking total income nearly 56 per cent of the gangmen households fall in the category of Rs 1000 to Rs 1500. Of total income 48.15 per cent is derived from employment in the railways. The 'Other activities' column shows zero income because gangmen are not free to take up any economic activities other than the full time gangmanship.

We have also calculated the wage earning per day worked in the various activities. It is clear again that the gangman gets more than double the daily wage in agricultural labour and a 60 per cent higher

wage than in construction work. (Although no male worked in construction, the prevailing rate is Rs 1012). This shows the wide difference in wages. Besides, the daily wage workers (who work casually) are not engaged for the full year. They are engaged only on seasonal work, in the peak seasons. In lean seasons if wages are higher than the prevailing rates in the agricultural sector they prefer to work in constructing roads and buildings. Unlike Ammapalem village daily wage labourers, hardly any male daily wage labourer of Dornakal is seen at the construction site, where only women and children are engaged in construction work. From Table 2 it can be observed that non-agricultural construction work wages for women and children are higher than what they can earn in the agricultural sector. In the lean season there is hardly any work in the agricultural sector on a hiring basis, and thus there is a rush for construction work in summer. Except in peak season activities such as heavy weeding, transplantation and harvesting on contract basis, most of the gangmen's wives do not work as casual workers as they think that their prestige is lowered; being gangmen's wives and not ordinary peasants. Women and children are involved only on contract work. Most of the gangmen's children are sent to school. Whenever there is a high wage rate however they prefer to stay back and work as contract wage labourers.

Returning to Table 1 (b) we see the nature of the loans gangmen had taken and the pattern of payment. Six gangmen sold their entire holdings which were very small (less than 5 acres) in order to enter the Railways. Besides selling their land they got loans by mortgaging their lands, which meant that subsequently they had to forgo their entire land holdings. Apparently after a few years they became permanent gangmen. Among 27 gangmen 16 are temporary which means that still they are in debt and have continued to borrow more to pay more money in order to become permanent. Eight gangmen have already become permanent, but are still in the clutches of the moneylender and will continue to be so until they have cleared their past debts. Part of their earnings is cut for principal and interest payments. Eleven gangmen are involved in the merchant *Khata* system. This means that every month groceries are bought by the family members from a merchant to meet their monthly consumption. Every month part of their salary is paid for this but a balance in their *Khata* always remains to be paid in the next month. They accept this *Khata* system, despite the fact that they are illiterate, unable to check the entries, and their consumption needs are supplied on their demand but at higher rates. Lambada gangmen are not bothered about the rates but satisfied by the supply of their provisions in time, any day of the month when they require it. Knowing this fact merchants take advantage of their innocence and need, and charge much higher prices. Most of the merchants are Marwaris, who migrated a long time ago for their business and settled in Dornakal. Since most of the surroundings of

Dornakal are occupied by Lambadas, the merchants (Marwaris) have also learnt the Lambada dialect in order to communicate with them. In every Marwari merchants' shop Lambadas are employed including from Poosala thanda. The local language is Telugu, yet surprisingly, the Lambada dialect dominates in Dornakal town and is known to every seller of goods.

#### LANDHOLDINGS OF THE GANGMEN

Table 4 shows the asset structure of landholding gangmen according to economic class and acreage group. Among three landholding gangmen two households come under rich peasants and one under the lower middle peasant category. The total land owned and operated by rich peasants is more than that of the lower middle peasant, but livestock and agricultural implements of the latter are greater than those of the former. The total family workers in the lower middle peasants' family are more than in the rich peasants' families. However the land value and non-agricultural assets of rich peasants are higher than those of the lower middle peasant.

Comparing the acreage groups we find the reverse position. The difference cannot be compared as such because the results on the same items are entirely different as apparent from Table 4. Of total land holdings of 3 gangmen 62.26 per cent of the land is owned and 59.18 per cent is operated by rich peasants, and 37.74 per cent is owned by lower middle peasants and 40.82 per cent operated. The lower middle peasant cultivates 100 per cent of his owned land whereas rich peasants cultivate 87.87 per cent. There are fewer family workers in the rich peasant households, and one rich peasant does not either supervise or give his land for cultivation to contract labour. The lower middle peasants' family labour days are 237.50 compared to only 88 for rich peasants (Table 5).

Although the operated area is 7.25 acres for rich peasants and only 5.00 acres for lower middle peasants, the per acre family labour input works out less at 35.8 days for rich peasants than for the lower middle peasants at 47.5-days (Table 6).

However, the economic classification according to the exploitation ratio-calculations may not be very valid in the case of landholding gangmen, because the men are employed in the organised sector and their land is cultivated by hired labourers. They are not able to concentrate on even supervision despite the fact that they could cultivate their own land before becoming gangmen.

Presently, economically and socially these families try to express their upward mobility through their food habits, dressing, and use of modern goods like cassette recorders, etc, even though they are still heavily indebted and in the clutches of the railway maistrees and local middle men.

Table 7 shows the asset structure of land holding gangmen by acreage. Under the category 2.50-5.00 acres the non-land assets are 63.68 per cent whereas under 5.00-7.50 acreage group it is only 28 per cent. It can be noticed that the smaller acreage holders have under-employed labour compared to the larger acreage holders.

The value of non-agricultural assets is more in the larger acreage groups. In the total of non-agricultural and agriculture assets the 5.00-7.50 acreage group holds significantly more than the other categories. The rich peasant who falls in the 5.00-7.50 acreage group is an exceptional gangman who is emerging slowly as small capitalist in the community.

#### THREE GANGMEN HOUSEHOLDS WITH SMALL LAND HOLDINGS (BELOW 5 ACRES)

We shall now look into some case studies of landholding gangmen. Only three gangmen families among 27 have any landholdings. These families engage in cultivation and wage-paid construction work as well as work on the Railways. In total they have 9 acres of dry land, 3.20 acres of wet land and no 'irrigated dry' land. These three households are exceptional in many ways and so are best dealt with separately as case studies.

*Badavatha Sama:* His family consists of 7 members. Three of them work, including the 65-year-old mother, who looks after the livestock. The wife works at home as well as hiring out her labour on a contract basis in peak seasons. Sama entered the Railways on a temporary basis in 1977 and became permanent in 1980, only after paying an additional Rs 5,000. In order to pay initially Rs 2,000 with a second instalment of Rs 3,000, he had to sell over time his entire dry land holding of 6 acres and 10 guntas. Initially he had to pay Rs 2,000 (however now the rates have increased to Rs 6,000). Until 1980 he was indebted, but eventually he cleared all his debts, paid Rs 5,000 additionally managed the family expenses, although to do this simultaneously he faced many problems. However he reports that now his present economic position is better than in previous years. He managed to clear all his debts and to buy out of his earnings 2.30 acres of dry land and 1.30 acres of wet land. He now gives loans to others by mortgaging their land and if they fail to pay him in the stipulated time he is entitled to have the mortgaged land in his possession. For example, he had given Rs 8,000 in May 1985 to Badawat Patel, one of the residents of the thanda. If the Patel fails to return the money within 3 years time Sama is liable to have the Patel's land (i.e. 1 acre of wet land). The market price for the 1 acre of wet land is now Rs 20,000. As per the terms and conditions, Sama is not supposed to claim any money interest but he is entitled to cultivate the one acre of land keeping the product for 3 years. If Patel fails to return the loan, automatically the 1 acre of land comes to Sama. This is a



common feature adopted in the area. (Patel borrowed Rs 8,000 in order to pay the dowry for his daughter's marriage, and is unlikely to return this amount to Sama, so that in all likelihood Sama will acquire this land from Patel). Besides this Sama buys and sells land on profit. On this business he gets 1,000 to 2,000 extra on every 4 acres of land. He started this business a year earlier. He was able to buy 3 acres of dry land and 2 acres of wet land and subsequently sold 2 acres of dry land and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of wet land in total. He also runs a chit fund business in the thanda among about ten families of gangmen. They give short loans for every 10 to 11 rupees out of the sum so collected. For short term loans rates of interest are always very high.

Through these businesses he was able to extend his land and cultivate it in his spare time from his work. The average productivity is Rs 19.35 per day. He also makes ropes in his leisure time on which he gets an average Rs 200 per annum. Initially his pay started at Rs 290 per month in 1977 and now is Rs 600 per month. Rs 100 is cut every month from his salary. He is able to send his two children to school. He was offered railway quarters in Papadpalli (near Kammam District) but he did not accept because he preferred to stay in his own thanda with his relatives at his grandfather's home.

The following data shows his economic activities, source of Income and per capita income, wage income per day. His family is composed of one man, two women and four children, with the number of workers being one man and two women.

Sama's total income from cultivation: Rs. 2,255.00

No. of man days HI (hired in): 101.5

Family labour days (women 45+man 15) : 60

Income from hiring out labour (women): 100.00

*in agriculture:*

No. of days hired out (women): 20

Wage income per day (women): 5.00

Total Income from Agriculture: Rs. 2,355.00

Since 1984 year was a drought year in this area he could not get the anticipated output. In normal years the capacity of production on his land holdings is Rs. 15000 per annum.

Total income in non-agriculture as gangmen: Rs. 7,200.00

No. of man days worked as gangmen on railways: 335

Income per day worked: 21.49

Total income from agriculture and non-agriculture: 9,555.00

Of which savings: 1,200.00

Debts: Nil

Per capita income on agriculture: 336.40

Total per capita income on agriculture and non-agriculture: 1,365.00

It has become a general phenomenon for landless labourers to seek employment in urban areas in the construction of roads, buildings and factories. At first they engage as unskilled labourer and later on learn techniques to work with machines for which they are given short term

training with stipend as 'maistrees'. Typically in this particular vicinity, small and middle landholders as well as some landless with outstanding loans are rushing for railway work in the hope of getting jobs as gangmen. But they retain their interests in farming. Although initially Sama sold part of his land to get a gangman's job, after a decade of his experiences as gangman he could observe and compare both non-agricultural work (in railways) and farming. He maintained his farming activity while working as a gangman, mainly by hiring labour and through his mother's co-operation. Although he had sold some of his land he continued to have attachment to the soil and even to the land he had parted with. After clearance of his debts and confirmation of his job, he started buying land out of his savings. Ultimately he wants to remain as a farmer rather than continue as gangman, because he thinks that the rules and regulations of his Railway job involve too much of discipline and curtail his other activities especially farming. Thus, now he is rapidly reverting back to his earlier life as a farmer by buying more and more land out of his earnings. At present he can compete with two of his other leading rich peasants in thanda. He is also in a better position now than before becoming a gangman as he now has some savings. His perception is that rural life (farming) is more socially free and productive in the long run than unfree urban life, where he is subjected to the management and discipline of the railways. Therefore he prefers to be an independent farmer (neo-rich peasant) rather than a gangman. However at present he is still holding the gangman's job.

*Janki Bai:* The head of the family, Janki Bai aged 55 years, is the second illegal wife of Badvath Chandya Naik of Poosala thanda. She left her first husband in the late 1950s in Gollagudam which is situated west of Poosala thanda. Initially she had come to visit her own sister Laxmi who is the wife of Chandya Naik in Poosala thanda. Subsequently she developed a conjugal relationship with Chandya Naik and now has one daughter and three sons by him. In the early 1970s after domestic squabbles it was decided by the panchayat that Janki should live separately with her children. She had no means of economic support and had a difficult time to survive and feed her minor children. She finally brought the case before the community and sought the people's co-operation towards getting her not only compensation but a share of land from her illegal husband. The case is still under process. Although part of two acres of dry land has been given to her for use, it has not yet been registered and the transfer finalised with Chandya Naik's family. She tried to earn an income through various activities like stitching the traditional Lambada dresses, selling vegetables, helping in traditional and Lambada marriages in order to run the family. She buys vegetables from cultivators directly from the fields and sells in the thanda as well as in nearby villages on profit. Besides

this, three of the family members who are now old enough, hire out their labour power when there is not sufficient work on their own field. If they have work on their fields, even in the peak season when the wage rates are high, they prefer to work on their own fields rather than working on other's fields for wages. Similarly in the peak season even if there is need to hire in labour from outside, they prefer not to hire any one but work on their own land for longer hours than the normal working hours to finish their work.

The total land holding size is five acres. Of this, two acres of dry land was given for cultivation by her illegal husband on the decision of the panchayat a year ago. However ownership has not been given and the legal sons dispute the right of the anyone except Janki Bai, especially her children, to have the land. Additionally 2.25 acres of dry land, and 0.75 acres of wet land has been bought by her using her own savings along with other family members savings.

Part of the above land has been mortgaged to pay bribes to the concerned employees to get a gangman's job for her son. However she refused to reveal the exact amount she paid on account for the bribe. She is afraid of discussing the details, because she has a feeling that her son may be dismissed from his work. After getting the gangman's job the position of the family has improved somewhat but the family remains indebted because loans have been taken for the bribe necessary for getting permanent status. The present sources of income and number of days worked are given below. The family at present comprises the old woman who is the head, a married son with wife, two other sons and a daughter.

#### Agriculture

Size of land holdings: Dry: 4.25, Wet: 0.75, Total: 5 acres

Family labour (standard man days worked on the holding in agriculture: 237.5 days

Net Income from Cultivation: Rs. 3,690.00

Earning per day: Rs. 15.54

(Note: No outside labourers are hired in.)

#### Non-Agriculture:

(a) Income in non-agriculture as gangmen: 6,000.00

Standard man days worked: 391.25

Earning per day: 15.33

(b) Other activities, (selling vegetables, stitching traditional dresses, helping in marriages): 1,110.00

Standard man days 123.5

Earnings per day: 8.97

Total income 10,800.00

Debts: Every month Rs 350 is paid as interest on various loans, (at the rate of 5% for both private and bank loan against mortgaging the land). The Rs 7,000 loan has been taken for paying the bribe for permanent gangmen status.

The above data show the income per day in different activities. Firstly in agriculture, this family works on its own and does not hire

any labour from outside. Working hours by family member workers are longer than the period for which they hire out on a casual basis. The income per day from cultivation is usually high at Rs 15.54 and is marginally higher than the daily earning from non-agriculture as gangmen. The mother is trying her best to sell land for the remaining payment for the son to become permanent in job. Similarly she is trying to get a job in the railway department for her second son by selling part of the land or from profits of the business of vegetables selling. Other than those two regular income sources, other activities like stitching traditional embroidered dresses, are taken up by the two women of the family and earned them Rs 1,110 in the reference year.

*Laudya Shakru:* He is aged 50 years and has been working as gangman for 30 years. He did not pay any bribe to the railways at the time of his appointment. In fact he was offered a job by the maistrees, and after 10 years or so he became permanent. From his savings he could buy two acres of dry land and one acre of wet land.

He gives out the land on contract basis for cultivation, i.e., meeting all input costs and contract labour cost. Since there is no proper supervision by him or his family members the production has been deteriorating every year. Land has been given not on lease but on contract basis (to contract labourers who perform the operations). Every year the total inputs are higher than the total output, thus paddy worth Rs 550 was produced in the year 1984 while the inputs were Rs 920. Thus Rs 370 loss was incurred. The expenditure of the family is more than his earnings. They do not supervise directly or indirectly on the fields or make proper decisions on investment in inputs. Consequently, by purchasing but not effectively using the inputs such as pesticides, fertilizers, manure at the correct time, less than potential output is produced and costs are increased. He has therefore decided to stop giving out the land for cultivation and to sell it to pay the required bribe in the railway department to get a job for his elder son who is likely to complete his 10th class. The wife does not work either on her fields or engage in other activities even in peak seasons. She thinks that it is below her dignity to work on fields like the ordinary labourer's wife. Even the sons work only rarely.

#### *Economic Position*

##### *Agriculture*

Size of land holdings: Dry land 2 acres, Wet land 1 acre, Total 3 acres

Family labour days: 28 (two sons work in field in their school vacations)

Hired out: Nil

Hired in on contract basis: 55 days

Total output :Rs 550

Agriculture Input: Rs 920

Loss: Rs 370

##### *Non-agriculture*

Income: Rs 7,200

Gangman total man days: 335

Earning per day: Rs 21.25

Savings: Rs 1,200.00 every year

Debts: Rs 2,600 with interest

Source: From local showkars and *Khatas* existing with local merchants. He maintains a pass book which has all entries of items bought by him from the cloth and grocery merchant. The fluctuating rates are not explained to him by the showkar but are entered in an arbitrary basis and they are accepted by Shakru. It shows that he has been cheated time and again.

The total consumption of the family per year is Rs 11,449. This family appears, in its food habits, dressing, education etc., to be competing with other non-Lambada permanent gangmen. Their social status is comparatively higher than that of the remaining gangmen. Apart from the normal consumption Shakru consumes a lot of liquor and tobacco regularly. His expenditure on these items alone works out to Rs 300 p.m. However he could manage to admit his sons in to the railway school at Dornakal. His main aim is now to admit his elder son in to the railways.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The case of the gangmen provides an interesting example of a group who have sought mobility and reliable income in different ways. In the early stages, they were keen to sell their lands to obtain this secure public sector employment which seemed more attractive than the insecure income from small farms. However, now many of them are involved in a process of trying to regain some landholding, so as to escape from the control and rigid requirements of gangmen's work. The trend shows a phase of integration into the urban industrial economy, which is now being followed by a delinking and an attempt to reintegrate with the local village economy. At the same time, there are others who are just beginning on this cycle, rural people who wish to obtain employment as gangmen because to them it still appears attractive.

This article is based on part of my Ph.D work; done at JNU/New Delhi. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Utsa Patnaik who was my supervisor for giving her valuable suggestions for writing this article.

Table 1  
Sales of Land on Mortgages, Savings and Debts of Gangmen, Poosala thanda, Dornakal Village

S. No.	Category	No. of house-holds	Nature of Holding of Gangmen's property	No. of acres and nature of land mortgaged and sold (in acres)	Wet	Dry	Total Land	Debts to be cleared (Rs.)	Savings directly cut from salary (Rs.)	Savings other than salary	Merchant 'Khata'	Total savings	Total Debts	Remarks
1.	Landless Gangman	24	16	8	3.00	1.50	12.50	30350 (23 gangmen) (15T+8)	9600 (8 GM) (8 P)	20000 (2 GM) (8 P)	26400 (11 GM) (6T+5P)	29600 (10 GM) (10 P)	56750 (22 GM) (16T+6P)	2 GM with no debts
2.	Average by involved persons						1319.56	1200	10000	2400	2960	2579.54		
3.	Average on Total no. of Household						1264.58	400	833.33	1100	1233.33	2364.58		
4.*	Landholding gangmen	3	1	2	4.00	2.00	1.00	7.00	6000 (2 GM) (2 T)	1200 (1 GM) (2 T)	2400 (1 GM)	1200	8400 (2 GM)	See the text on land holding Gangmen
5.	Average by involved persons						3000	1200	-	2400	1200	4200		
6.	Average on Total No. of Households	3					2000	400	-	800	400	2800		

\* Landholding gangmen's cases are discussed in detail. See the text on Landholding gangmen.

Table 2  
Income per Day, Average Days per Worker, Per Capita Income of Gangmen, Poosala thanda, Dornakal Village

S.No.	Item	Agricultural			Construction			Non-Agriculture (Rlys)			Other Activities			Total income (all sources)		
		Men	Wo- men	Chil- dren	Total	Men	Wo- men	Chil- dren	Total	Men	Wo- men	Chil- dren	Total	Men	Wo- men	Chil- dren
<i>On 22 households of landless gangmen</i>																
1.	Family members	24	24	55	103	24	24	55	103	24	24	55	103	24	24	55
2.	No. of workers	4	17	2	23	-	4	2	6	24	-	-	1	24	17	3
3.	Standardising men days	207.5	1166	100	1473.5	-	345	35	380	1460	-	-	8460	25	8667.5	1511
4.	Income	1650	6120	320	8090	-	2760	140	2900	156000	-	-	156000	100	157650	8880
5.	Income (per day)	7.95	5.25	3.2	5.49	-	8	4	7.63	18.44	-	-	18.44	4	18.18	5.87
6.	Average days (per worker)	51.87	68.59	50	64.06	-	86.25	17.5	63.33	352.15	-	-	352.50	25	361.14	88.88
7.	Per capita income	-	-	-	78.54	-	-	-	28.15	-	-	-	1514.56	-	-	-
													0.97	-	-	-
																1622.96

Note: Total No. of households - 22  
Note: The total No. of gangmen households is 22 but the total No. of gangmen is greater

Table 3  
Distribution of number of landless and landholding gangmen by income groups: Poosala thanda of Dornakal

Item	0.500	500-1000	1000-1500	1500-2000	Above 2000	Total
Income from agriculture	27	-	-	-	-	27
Work on railways as gangmen	-	7	13	6	1	27
Construction work	27	-	-	-	-	27
Other activities	27	-	-	-	-	27
Total income	-	-	15	10	2	27
Note: Total number of gangmen households	=	=	25			
Total number of gangmen	=	=	27			
Total landless gangmen	=	=	24			
Total landholding gangmen	=	=	3			



Table 4  
Asset Structure of landholding of gangmen (Pocsala thanda, Dornakal Village)

Category and Total No. of Households	Land owned	Land operated	Live stock	Agricultural Implements		Cattle shed + grain gola	Total non-land assets	Total land value	Total agricultural assets	Non-agricultural	Total agricultural assets+ non-agricultural assets
				Traditional	Modern						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Total rich peasants (2)	8.25	7.25	4400	390	-	-	4790	108500	113290	9025	122315
Total lower middle peasants (1)	5.00	5.00	8000	400	-	-	8400	57500	65900	2600	68500
Total	13.25	12.25	12400	790	-	-	13190	166000	179190	11625	190815

Table 4 (Contd.)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Average value on rich peasants	4.12	3.62	2200	195	-	-	2395	54250	56645	4512.5	61157.5
Average lower middle peasants	5.00	5.00	8000	400	-	-	8400	57500	65900	2600	68500
Average on Total	4.41	4.08	4133.33	263.33	-	-	4396.66	5533.33	59730	3875	63605
Percentages	62.26 37.74	59.18 40.82	35.48 64.52	49.37 50.63	-	-	36.32 63.68	65.36 34.64	63.22 36.78	77.63 22.37	64.10 35.90
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	-	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<i>Per acre value on operated area</i>											
Rich peasants			606.90	53.79	-	-	660.69	14965.51	15626.20	1244.83	16871.03
Lower middle peasants	1600		80.00	-	-	1680.00	11500.00	13180.00	520.00	13700.00	
All			1012.24	64.49	-	-	1076.73	13551.02	14627.75	948.98	15576.73

Table 5  
Labour Use by Acreage Groups and Economic Class of Gangmen Poosala thanda (Dornakal) Village

Category	Total No. of house- holds	Family labour days	Hired in labour days	Hired out labour days	Hired in + Family labour days	Hired out + Family labour days	Net hired in labour days	Exploitation Ratio = Net hired in/Family labour
<i>Acreage</i>								
0.10-2.50	1	28.12	50.0	-	83.12	28.12	55.0	1.95
2.50-5.00	1	237.50	-	84.37	237.50	321.87	-84.37	-0.35
5.00-7.50	1	60.00	116.5	15.00	176.50	75.00	101.50	1.69
All	3	325.62	171.50	99.37	497.12	424.99	72.13	0.22
Rich peasants		88.12	171.5	15.00	259.62	103.12	156.50	1.77
Lower middle peasants		237.50	-	84.37	237.50	321.87	-84.37	-0.35
ALL		325.62	171.5	99.37	497.12	424.99	72.13	0.22
Average values on rich peasants		44.06	85.75	7.5	129.81	51.56	78.25	1.77
Average values on lower middle peasants	237.50	-	84.37	237.50	32.87	-84.37	-0.35	

Table 6  
Labour use per acre of landholding gangmen (Poosala thanda, Dornakal)

Category	Family labour	Hired in labour	Family labour + hired in labour
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Rich peasants	(2)	23.65	35.81
Lower middle peasants	(1)	-	47.50

Table 7  
Asset structure of land holdings gangmen by Acreage groups (Poosalathanda) Dornakal Village

Category	Land owned	Land operated	Live stock	Traditional (Agricultural Implementations)	Total non-land assets	Total land value	Total agricultural assets	Total non-agricultural assets	Total agricultural + non-agricultural assets
0.10 - 2.50	3.00	2.00	900	150	1050	50000	51050	510	51560
2.50 - 5.00	5.00	5.00	8000	400	8400	57500	65900	2600	68500
5.00 - 7.50	5.25	5.25	3500	240	3740	58500	62240	8515	70755
ALL	13.25	12.25	12400	790	13190	166000	179190	11625	190815
Average	4.41	4.08	4133.33	263.33	4396.66	5533.33	59730	3875	63605
<i>Percentages</i>									
0.10 - 2.50	22.64	16.33	7.26	18.99	7.96	30.12	28.49	4.39	27.02
2.50 - 5.00	37.74	40.82	64.52	50.63	63.68	34.64	36.78	22.36	35.90
5.00 - 7.50	39.62	42.85	28.22	30.38	28.35	35.24	34.73	73.25	37.08
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<i>Per Acre Value</i>									
0.10 - 2.50	-	-	450	75	525.00	25000	25525	255	25780
2.50 - 5.00	-	-	1600	80	1680.00	11500	13180	520	13700
5.00 - 7.50	-	-	666.66	45.71	712.38	11142.85	11855.24	1621.90	13477.14
ALL	-	-	1012.24	64.49	1076.73	13551.02	14627.75	948.98	15576.73

### *Declining Food Production per Head : A Pervasive Problem of Developing Economies*

In his paper on 'Structural Characteristics of the Mexican Economy 1942-82', Mrityunjay Mohanty has given an overview of Mexican economic development and has rightly devoted considerable attention to the agricultural sector, which after a period of fairly rapid expansion from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, entered a phase of crisis during the decade up to the mid-1970s, turning Mexico into a net importer of basic foodgrains and contributing to the balance of payments problem. Beginning in early 1980 under the Lopez-Portillo administration, the SAM strategy was aimed at achieving food self-sufficiency by 1985. While the short-run growth results were impressive, by 1983 growth began to decline and under de la Madrid, SAM was dropped altogether. Instead, a policy of promoting exports of commercial crops and cut-back in *ejidal* investment, accelerated the process of import-dependence for food during the second half of the 1980s. Mexico was importing 4.87 m. tonnes of foodgrains by 1987 compared to 2.88 m. tonnes in 1974; the index of food production had dropped to 97 for 1985-87 compared to the base of 100 for 1978-81; given a nearly 3 per cent rate of population growth the decline in per capita foodgrains production was quite substantial. The purpose of this brief note is to underline certain aspects of the inter-crop inter-product and spatial pattern of capitalist agricultural development in Mexico which are of some interest to us in India.

There appears to be a fairly general and pervasive problem of agricultural growth in underdeveloped countries industrialising under the capitalist path, of which Mexico is but an especially striking example. This is that capitalist growth produces severe social and regional imbalances and through increasing commercialisation leads to a *decline* of per capita food production and even availability decline, for the mass of rural peasants and hired workers: and this can happen even when the overall rate of agricultural growth outstrips popula-

\* Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

tion growth. Decline in food availability per head of rural population has been a marked feature of a number of Latin American countries (de Janvry, 1982), and in the case of India we have shown that despite an overall rise in per capita foodgrains production during 1950 to 1986, in every region except North India this statistic shows a declining trend between 1960 and 1986 (Patnaik, 1988, 1989).

In the case of Mexico the reasons are not far to seek for the remarkable phenomenon of not enough food for Mexican peasants and rural wage workers even though overall agricultural growth rates are impressive. The pull of market demand from the advanced capitalist world, notably the US, combined with the pull of demand from the urban well-to-do within the country itself (given a highly skewed income distribution, as stressed by Mohanty) have strongly biased the production structure towards capitalist production, undertaken by a minority of rural producers, of (a) a number of exportables which are luxuries (from the viewpoint of the domestic consumers) such as fruits and vegetables in frozen or processed form, and livestock—all of which displace cropland actually or potentially producing foodgrains, (b) 'exports' from the rural to the domestic urban sector, of high-value products in demand from the affluent, such as poultry, eggs, pork, meat and milk, which again displaces foodgrains area in favour of animal forage and feedgrains (we will refer to external exports as exports, and sales to the domestic urban sector as 'exports').

The strategy of promoting capitalist production in agriculture has been one of irrigation investment by the State combined with private investment by the capitalist minority in the more profitable export as well as 'export' crops/products. The consequence has been the displacement, first relative and then absolute, of foodgrain production, stagnation in the economy and incomes of the majority of middle and small peasants, and increasing proletarianisation of poor peasants. Capitalist investment and growth tends to be spatially highly concentrated: in Mexico the northern provinces of Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California and Guanajuato account for a disproportionately high share of value added in agriculture, concentrated in turn in the federal irrigated districts within this region. The northern region bordering or close to the USA has become an integral periphery of the US economy, as its entire production structure including livestock production is geared to the US market and is pervasively controlled by TNCs entering into contracts with Mexican capitalist farmers and ranchers.

The inter-product pattern of growth (Table 1) shows that in the first group with the highest annual expansion rates of 5 to 10 per cent, are included poultry, sorghum, safflower, hogs, eggs and tomatoes. The second group with medium growth rates include milk, cattle and wheat, while the last group with low or negative growth rates include the traditional staples like maize, beans and rice or the old export crops like sugarcane, cotton, and coffee (Rodriguez, 1980).

Table 1  
Growth rates of main agricultural products, 1965-7 to 1976-8  
(per cent per annum)

	Group 1 (High)	Group 2 (Medium)	Group 3 (Low)
Poultry	12.7	Milk 4.0	Oranges 2.2
Sorghum	10.6	Cattle 3.7	Rice 1.7
Safflower	9.5	Wheat 3.3	Coffee 1.4
Pigs	8.2		Maize 0.7
Eggs	5.0		Sugarcane -0.3
Tomatoes	4.9		Beans -1.5
			Cotton -4.5

Source: Rodriguez, 1980.

While sorghum (javar, cholam) is a basic foodgrain for the peasants and rural workers of the Deccan plateau in India, it is not used as a human foodgrain but exclusively for preparing animal feed in Mexico. By 1984 sorghum occupied more than twice the area of wheat, the grain used in urban consumption. The rapid growth of sorghum output at over 10 per cent annually thus reflects a displacement of foodgrains by a feedgrain to meet the rapidly expanding demand for bovines and for meat of various kinds, the first for export to the US and the second for 'exports' domestically. Area under all forage crops and oilseeds (used in feed) has risen from 5.99 lakh ha. to over 32.5 lakh ha. during 1960 to 1975, much of it in the federal irrigated districts in northern Mexico (Sanderson, 1975). The TNCs like Ralston-Purina, Anderson Clayton and Ciba-Geigy control the forage crops and livestock sector of Mexico; they have spread the use of high yielding sorghum, while through the device of the producer contract, the demands of slaughter houses and feedmills in the US South-West determine the operation of Mexican capitalists engaged in growing forage and raising livestock in the border districts of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Tamaulipas. Mexico now accounts for over half of US imports of live bovines; the meat is mixed with fat and sold for direct consumption and used in the fast-food industry in the US.

Thus a process of what Mexican economists call 'ganaderizacion' or production oriented to livestock at the expense of basic foodgrains, has been a very striking feature of the Mexican experience. The proportion of total grain produced which is fed to livestock rose from only 6 per cent to over 32 per cent between 1960 and 1980 while the proportion of cropland devoted to animal production rose from 5 per cent to over 23 per cent during this period. The losers from this process have been the peasants constituting over 80 per cent of all producers, whose staple products—maize, beans, chilli and rice—have shown a dismal performance except for the brief two-year period when SAM was in operation. Since profitable capitalist production for export and 'exports', requiring substantial investment, could only be undertaken by



a minority of large-scale producers—greatly helped most of the time by government price policy—the majority of rural producers have been excluded from the process of rising incomes. Indeed the standard of living of the ordinary Mexican and labourer has been falling in about the same proportion as the standard of living of Mexican cattle and hogs have been rising. The stagnating and slow-growing provinces are those located on the central plateau, characterised by the rainfed agriculture of the maize and beans producing small peasantry: Durango, Jalisco, Michoacan, San Luis Potosi and Zacatecas.

Massieu (1985) gives a useful classification of the agricultural producers on the basis of the 1980 agricultural census data, employing three main categories—peasants, 'transitional producers', and capitalists, with the following characteristics, indicating the high degree of concentration of land, other means of production and use of fertilizers.

Table 2  
Per cent of Total

<i>Producers</i>	<i>Cultivated Area</i>	<i>Means of production</i>		<i>Index of farm size</i>	<i>Per cent with irrigation fertilizers</i>	
1. Peasants	86.5	57.0	35.0	1.0	21	31
2. Transitional producers	11.7	22.0	20.5	1.6	28	48
3. Capitalists	1.8	21.0	44.5	17.7	39	75
	100.0	100.0	100.0			
Absolute Number	2.50 m.					

Apart from livestock the other main displacer of cropland from food production has been the canned and processed foods sector. The Bajio region, the former granary of the country in colonial times, has seen a substantial diversion of land to vegetable and fruit production for the frozen and canned food market in the U.S. Grown and packed under the control of TNCs like Birdseye/General Foods, Del Monte, Gerber, Pet Inc., McCormick and Clemente Jacques, a range of fresh frozen and canned citrus fruit, tomatoes, strawberries, pineapple, asparagus, peas, sweet corn, etc., load the supermarket shelves in the USA. Needless to say, about 90 per cent of the Mexican population cannot afford to consume these products their country exports.

Some might argue that with such buoyant exports and the linking to the prosperous US market, Mexico can probably well afford to import foodgrains. There is a problem, however, quite apart from the fact that

purchasing power in the hands of a majority of peasants and rural workers is stagnant, and food availability falling, placing at nutritional risk over 19 m. people. It is that the balance of agricultural trade has been persistently negative. While agriculture accounts for 15 per cent of Mexico's exports, it also accounts for 13 per cent of its much higher import bill, owing mainly to increasing food imports to feed the urban population. Between 1981 and 1985 despite the spurt in exports the agricultural trade balance showed a deficit of 862 m. dollars; excluding coffee, the deficit would be 1501 m. dollars.

Apart from the minority comprising capitalists, exporters and the upper couple of deciles of the domestic urban population there do not seem to have been any Mexican beneficiaries of the strategy of export and 'export' oriented commercialisation of agriculture. Rather, the growth process has become increasingly disarticulated from domestic mass demand, and ceased to represent the interests of all except a minority. The Mexican experience should lead us to rethink our own growth strategy in agriculture and raise afresh the question—growth for whom, and to what end?

#### REFERENCES

1. Massieu, Yolanda C., 1985, 'Tecnología Agropecuaria', in Memoria del Seminario de Investigación, Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, 13-16 May.
2. Patnaik, U., 1989 'Food Availability and Famine—A Longer View', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (Jan. 1990, forthcoming).
3. Rodríguez, G., 1980, 'Tendencias de la producción agropecuaria en las dos últimas décadas' in *Economía Mexicana* CWE 21, Mexico City.
4. Sanderson, S.E., 1986, *The Transformation of Mexican Agriculture*, Princeton University Press.
5. IBRD (World Bank), *World Development Report 1989*, OUP, New York.

*Note:* The data from Spanish language sources used in this note are from an excellent research paper, unpublished, by Terry McKinley, research scholar at the Department of Economics, University of California (Riverside). I regret I do not have the paper at the moment but only notes therefrom and hence cannot give the title of the paper.

# MANOHAR BOOK SERVICE

2/6 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002

Phones: 3275162, 3262796

APARNA BASU & BHARATI RAY: *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference 1927-1990* (Price: Rs. 210)

This book makes a detailed study of the AIWC and its role in women's development in the last six decades. It focuses on the efforts of the AIWC in the fields of education, social legislation and social reform. The Conference played a notable role in initiating the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 and a uniform civil code for all communities. The book makes extensive use of the Conference records and should be of great interest to scholars of history as well as those of women's studies.

INDU BANGA (ED.): *The City in Indian History*

This book covers the entire span from the emergence of cities in pre-historic times to the processes of urbanisation in modern India. Fourteen contributors from different disciplines address themselves to urban patterns, demography, morphology, economy, social life, and politics in a single centre or a major region of the sub-continent.

MAUNG HTIN AUNG: *Lord Randolph Churchill and the Dancing Peacock* (Price: Rs. 200)

This work, written mainly in narrative form, is a vivid account of the political background, the real reasons and the questionable methods of diplomacy adopted by Lord Randolph Churchill in annexing the Burmese kingdom in 1855. It is based on first-hand accounts furnished to the author by Myotha Wundauk and his lady who was one of the ladies-in-waiting to the queens at the courts of King Mindon and Theebaw.

SUSAN S. WADLEY (ED.): *The Powers of Tamil Women* (Price: Rs. 150)

This volume seeks to contribute to the rather sparse literature on the subject of Sakti, the female generative force of the universe, by bringing together a number of studies relating to the power, the Sakti, of women in the Tamil-speaking areas of South India and Sri Lanka.

- ◆ For libraries and individuals, 10% discount, post-paid.
  - ◆ Special additional discount for *Social Scientist* subscribers.
- Please quote your subscription number with orders.

اُردو اکادمی، دہلی

آپ کی  
اپنی اکادمی ہے

سیکرٹری

رابطہ: پتہ: سید روئے صابانگ شہری  
فون: ۵۲۷۶۱۱ ۵۲۷۶۲۸

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Non-Walrasian Paradigms*

Takashi Negishi, *Economic Theories in a non-Walrasian Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1985; pp. 205, price not indicated.

This is a collection of fourteen essays on different aspects and areas of economic theory—the unifying theme is that they all relate to problems in some non-Walrasian paradigm. Non-Walrasian paradigms, we may recall, are many: Smith, Mill, Richardo, Marx, Jevons, Böhm-Bawark, Marshall. . . , and the essays discuss selected issues and problems in the theoretical work of these authors. Since the non-Walrasian tradition includes all these diverse authors, very different in their assessment of the capitalist system—to wit Marx and Böhm-Bawark—the commonality running through these essays is not of any immediate political interest. But the book is certainly of interest to economists and scholars of the history of economic thought.

The author has arranged the essays in four groups. The first on increasing returns and diminishing costs, goes back to the well-known problem of diminishing costs in a competitive economy, which in Marshall causes a problem of indeterminate output for firms eventually leading to monopoly. But in Adam Smith, too, there is a notion of increasing returns arising out of division of labour at the firm level, and this in Smith is the driving force for not only firm's own growth but indeed for the development of the entire system. Negishi asks an interesting question: how does Smith reconcile this basic firm-level drive for increased division of labour with a competitive economy in which the firms are operating? Negishi has an interesting answer—namely that firms face kinked demand curves at the 'natural prices' of Smith—not due to fellow firms' reaction *a la* Sweezy, but due to consumers' own reaction, so that diminishing costs due to increased division of labour does not upset a 'competitive equilibrium.' That 'the division of labour is limited by the extent of the market'—the famous Smithian doctrine—holds thus with a novel significance in Negishi's interpretation. In the same-group of essays the author considers Marshall's life-cycle theory to explain diminishing cost and considers Marx's falling rate of profit under diminishing costs too.

The 'classic' questions of value and distribution are discussed in the second group of essays titled *Wages and Profit*. For students of this area an essay that reexamines the Marxian dichotomy of values and the prices of production in the presence of ground rent, and one that examines Böhm-Bawark on the positive rate of interest in a stationary state are of considerable interest.

A third group of essays deal with the theories of international trade and investment. An essay that relates Ricardo's comparative cost doctrine to Emanuel's unequal exchange places both in a somewhat novel perspective. The last group of essays on markets and money discusses the early microeconomists like Jevons, Edgeworth, Cownot, Monger and finally Marshall to explore the possible microfoundations of macroeconomics and monetary theory.

As mentioned above, what is common in these essays that scan ideas originating over a period of two hundred years is that none of them use the Walrasian market paradigm. For economic theory this is a significant unifying theme because it enables the reader to have a glimpse of the variety and the richness of the constructions used by authors as diverse in ideology and chronology as Smith, Marx and Keynes—outside what is now surprisingly regarded as the mainstream of economic tradition. Particularly for the students of the nineties to whom a rigorous construction is synonymous with a Walrasian construction (with or without the auctioneer), and the other traditions are interesting only to the extent that they often provide the same kinds of conclusions, a book like this can be quite revealing. There is no denying the elegance of the Walrasian structure, so much admired by Joseph Schupeter, but it is vital to point out how often the elegance has been bought at the cost of abstracting from such problems of the economic reality that we may ignore only at our own peril. We thank Negishi for producing this small volume which may help us awaken to the rich varieties of analytical constructions we economists inherit, and are yet forgetful about.

AMAL SANYAL  
Centre for Economic Studies and Planning  
Jawaharlal' Nehru University  
New Delhi

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Mensheviks*

Leopold H. Haimson (ed), *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries. Voices from the Menshevik Past.*, in collaboration with Ziva Galiliy Garcia and Richard Wortman, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 515, £ 40.00

Neglect of those who lost out in the Russia of 1917 has been the weakness of not only the Soviet historiography. Western scholars—Cold War, Liberal, and Marxist—have also, for different reasons, concerned themselves mainly with explanations of the victory of the Bolsheviks. Other political groups were seen to have lost out because, for whatever reasons, the Bolsheviks had succeeded. In the last decade, at least in the West, there has been a growing interest in the other political tendencies which has taken the form of Ph.D theses leading to publication of monographic studies on the different bourgeois-liberal groups and also the Social Revolutionaries, discussing their rôle right upto 1917 and after. In comparison, works on the Mensheviks, have dealt mainly with the debate between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, or the rôle of the Social Democrats in the workers movement upto 1905. This work on the three Menshevik revolutionaries, therefore, fills a very visible gap.

The book is timely, and interesting for many reasons, apart from being well presented. It consists of three long interviews conducted over a period of five years, 1960 to 1965, with three leading activists of the Russian Menshevik movement, and a long introduction by Leopold Haimson. The work is clearly a labour of love and scholarship, not only on the part of the editors but also those who have been interviewed.

The three Menshevik revolutionaries whose reminiscences are presented are Lydia Dan, Boris Niccolaeovsky and George Denike. According to the editors they have been chosen as representatives for reconstructing the history of Menshevism because of the complementariness of their vision made possible because of their different social backgrounds and different generations in terms of age and experience. That the three were conscious contributors to the

volume, saw it partly as their own project, and had their own vision and perception of history gives the book an added significance.

The three editors, on their part, have been long involved with working on problems of Russian history and have previous monographs on related themes, apart from a number of articles in various academic journals. This enables them to give the interviews a shape and content that is valuable to students and researchers. For the lay reader the book is almost a literary event. The interviews bring to life in a simple, lucid and sincere manner a significant component of Russian life in the times described by those who saw themselves as conscious, committed and relevant revolutionaries almost to their dying days. One is left with a feeling of awe, sympathy and a sense of their tragedy as participants who gave so much of themselves to the revolution, but could only have failed, given their world view, organisational practice and deterministic understanding of the laws of history.

Through the interviews and the introduction the book brings to life the moral and political crisis faced by the Menshevik leaders at crucial junctures in the history of their country, as well as what went into shaping their ideas, values and attitudes as a coherent political group. It is an effort also to reconstruct the history of the party. 1905; 1917 are shown as important stages, turning points for the evolution of Menshevik ideology as distinct from Bolshevism. Much of what was characteristic of Menshevism came to be defined in relation to the Bolshevik theory and politics during the revolutionary movement. The book also brings out how, even in emigration, the reports of collectivization, purges and the consequences of rapid industrialisation were sought to be confronted by the Mensheviks from within the framework of a world view which had remained unchanged. The most poignant period for them, as the book reveals, was when a second wave of emigres came to the United States during the early post-World War II years. The Mensheviks did not see in these 'rebels' against 'Stalinism' any of the positive values they had stood for. They found this particular nature of opposition to Stalin totally incomprehensible, and, as Haimson points out in his introduction, never recovered from this intellectual and emotional shock.

In the context of the many failures of the first experiment with building socialism, if one has the illusion that Menshevism may have been a viable alternative, a reading of the book reveals that this was not so. Doubtless what the reader gains from the book will depend on what he is looking for. It is a book that must be read because it raises as many questions as it answers. With all that is happening in the socialist world today new questions regarding the revolutionary movements are as important as answers to old questions.

• NALINI FANEJA

Dept. of Correspondence Courses, Delhi University



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Thinking with Heidegger*

Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, (German edn, 1963) English edn, Humanities Press, 1990, \$ 15.

The influence and fascination of Martin Heidegger's thought is undeniable. His influence on French existentialism (Sartre), theology (Bultmann), hermeneutics (Gadamer), neostructuralism (Lacan, Derrida) and modern literature (Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan) are undeniable. And yet there is something which in contemporary discussions on Heidegger has often been called a 'wound' in his thought. This 'wound' is his involvement with fascism, especially the role he played as rector of the Freiburg University and his notorious rector's speech in 1933. For many who have been fascinated by his thought the obduracy with which Heidegger maintained a total silence about his enmeshment with fascism itself became a problem. Jürgen Habermas, in an early essay (later included in *Philosophisch-Politische Profile*, 1971), reviewing the revised version of Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, first published in 1935 and then in 1953, asked the question how the author of *Being and Time*, which Habermas terms the most significant philosophical occurrence since Hegel's *Phenomenology*, how a thinker of his calibre could reach a level of such primitivism of collaborating with fascism. This question has been recently discussed with great vigour after Victor Farias' study on *Heidegger under National Socialism* (translated from French into German, 1989) which created a furore in France where Heidegger's influence in philosophical circles was always very strong. The large number of publications on Heidegger seem to the present reviewer to concentrate on explaining Heidegger's 'Sündenfall' (fall from grace) and to come to terms with it.

There seem to be two lines of argument. One line was already delineated by Heidegger himself by stating in the heroic mode that 'great men make great errors'.

It is significant, for instance, that a victim of fascism like Hannah Arendt was ready to reconcile herself with Heidegger. But others like Karl Löwith (Heidegger's former student) or Herbert Marcuse were unable to do so. Heidegger's apologists have suggested that he aspired to the intellectual leadership of the Nazi movement. An attempt

which was foiled by the mediocrity and intrigues of the intellectual advisers of the 'Führer', thus leading to Heidegger's withdrawal and silence. But there is sufficient evidence by now to show that Heidegger did not really ever give up the basic position which made him consider National Socialism and Germany's essential inheritance of the Greek spirit deriving from this philosophy. As an instance: in a lecture from the year 1949, Heidegger was able to say that agriculture has become mechanised food-industry, which is essentially the same as the fabrication of corpses in gas-chambers, in death-camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of countries, the same as the fabrication of hydrogen-bombs. The shock about this pronouncement derives from the fact that there is simply no way how a philosopher can equate the attempted extinction of a certain racially defined people with the consequences of modernity deriving from what Heidegger called the 'forgetfulness of being'.

Apologists of Heidegger have shrugged off his great silence as an aberration which does not detract from the greatness of his philosophy. Another line of argumentation is to emphasise the homology of his thought and involvement with fascist praxis. Perhaps in the context of this present Heidegger discussion it is worthwhile remembering Habermas' line that perhaps the time has come to think with Heidegger against Heidegger.

Otto Pöggeler's study was first published in 1963 in German and published in England in 1987 and reprinted in 1989 and 1990. This seems to be sufficient testimony of the interest of the English-speaking world in Heidegger's philosophy.

Translating Heidegger or a book on Heidegger from German into English is not an easy task. Apparently when Victor Farias as a student visited Heidegger in 1967 in order to discuss a project of translating *Sein and Zeit* (Being and Time), the 'Master' warned him that it would be difficult to express his thought in Romanic languages because these did not have the strength to express the essence of Being. Klaus Berghan, to whose review of recent Heidegger discussions I am indebted (*The German Quarterly*, Spring 1990), points out that this is arrogant ethnocentrism and reminds us of a well-known passage in a famous *Spiegel* interview of 1966 in which Heidegger said that when the French start thinking they speak in German. However that may be, the translators of Pöggeler's book have done a very commendable job. They write, quite correctly, in their Preface: 'The difficulties that Heidegger presents to the translator are by now common knowledge. We considered the possibilities, both tried and untried for, key concepts, and then decided upon what seemed best to us. The choice may often be controversial. . .' (p. vii). Pöggeler's book is well known as a dependable guide through the peculiarities of Heidegger's thought. If a reader wants to understand Heidegger's notion of the forgetfulness of being, technology and the question of origins Pöggeler is a reliable guide. He deals with Heidegger's 'Fundamental Ontology,'

'Metaphysics', the question of origins and his preoccupation with questions of art and language.

How little the customary 'scholarly preoccupation' with Heidegger enters the region of this thinker's question is unmistakably evident in its inability to leave Heidegger in peace, to leave him to the freedom of his way. The first requirement incumbent upon one who wants to 'understand' Heidegger is this: one does not grasp after ultimate answers, prejudge, or evaluate, but rather first of all simply listens to the one question which Heidegger thinks through. Such listening does not increase knowledge, nor does it determine answers to ultimate questions. It could be, however, that simply by listening, one's own thinking is imperceptibly but fundamentally transformed. The composed thinking which expects nothing and wants nothing for itself but which is prepared to let itself be tested and transformed by a claim is perhaps alone capable of experiencing what must be thought, that which has summoned Heidegger's thinking along its way.

This introduction would like to be a signpost for this way; in fact, it should be nothing but a signpost by which he who seeks a way can orient himself, but which remains behind for him who has already set out on the way. Perhaps it can allow Heidegger's way to become provisionally visible for some as possibly their own way; for others it can lead a step nearer to the decision not to travel this way. However it may be, it will suffice if this introduction to Martin Heidegger's thinking elucidates to some extent Heidegger's path of thinking as a whole in terms of what he once said in a conversation with a Japanese guest about a very specific stretch of the way: 'I always followed only an obscure trace, but I did follow. The trace was a scarcely perceptible promise which bespoke a releasing into the open. It was at times dark and perplexing, sometimes flashing like a sudden insight which then again withdrew itself for a long time from every attempt to put it into language.'

Pöggeler (p. 7, referring to the *Spiegel* interview)

What Pöggeler writes in his Introduction is true but the trace that Heidegger left was not only the profundity of historical thought but also the silence with which his involvement with fascism was maintained and the problematic question of the relationship between thought, political practice and the responsibility of thought and its ability to influence the political praxis of others.

ANIL BHATTI

Centre for German Studies

Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi

## ERRATUM

*In the article titled 'Mandal, Mandir aur Masjid: "Hindu" Communalism and the Crisis of the Indian State' by Sukumar Muralidharan, published in Social Scientist, Issue no. 210, October 1990, page 43 should read as follows. The error is regretted.*

allow electoral calculations to distract him from the far more vital mission of ensuring communal peace in the country' (emphasis added).

Later, as it became apparent that the man of impeccable upbringing was, indeed, pandering to religious fanaticism to bolster his vote bank, the *TOI* became, in turn, plaintive and accusing—plaintive towards Rajiv Gandhi, accusing towards the opposition parties. In its editorial of October 21, 1989, it argued that the Congress promotion of Hindu revanchism was 'regrettable', but the electoral understandings being worked out by the Janata Dal and the CPI(M) were, respectively, 'pathetic' and 'tragic'.

In a gesture of surpassing cynicism, Rajiv Gandhi inaugurated his election campaign at Ayodhya on November 3, 1989, with the promise to usher in a *Ram Rajya* if re-elected. By then it was clear that the secular boot was on the other foot—it was V.P. Singh who was making the more definitive statements on Ayodhya, it was V.P. Singh who was offering to go to the disputed site on November 9, to try and stop the threatened demolition of a place of worship. But the *TOI* was firm in its editorial policy of unrequited love towards Rajiv Gandhi, as the following excerpt from its editorial of November 7 shows: 'It is still not too late for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to call the VHP's bluff. Even today, it is possible for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to set aside momentarily his electoral preoccupations and go along with his political adversaries in order to defuse the tensions building up at Ayodhya.'

After the completion of the *Ram Shilanyas* at Ayodhya on November 9, the *TOI*'s editorial sigh of relief could be heard for miles around. It was now possible to be a lap-dog of the Congress(I), while still maintaining a pretence of secularism. In an astonishing display of political amnesia, the *TOI* proclaimed editorially that 'the foundation stone-laying ceremony would not have passed off as peacefully as it did, had the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. N.D. Tiwari, fully backed by the Union Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh, not worked assiduously behind the scenes' (November 10, 1989). Curiously, Rajiv Gandhi was, at around the same time, making the breathtakingly mendacious assertion, that the 'credit' for the peaceful 'passage of the foundation-laying ceremony at Ayodhya' should go to his party and its government (*The Hindu*, November 10, 1989, page 1). Was there any coordination between 'his party and its government', and the *TOI* in simultaneously publishing this astounding claim, one wonders. And why were 'his party and its government', not to mention their hirelings in the press, not quite so keen on owning up responsibility for the 400 lives that had been lost in the run-up to the *shilanyas*?

The Congress(I) stands condemned for its role in fomenting the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy for narrow electoral gains. Astoundingly, of all the parties that today dot the Indian political

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

Reflections on the Nature of the Indian Bourgeoisie  
Amiya Kumar Bagchi 3

Social Stratification in Ancient India: Some  
Reflections Vivekanand Jha 19

Varna Ideology and Social Change Suvira Jaiswal 41

Division and Difference in the 'Discipline' of Economics  
Jack Amariglio, Stephen Resnick, Richard Wolff 49

REVIEW ARTICLE Postmodernism, Postmarxism and  
the Question of Class Kian Tajbakhsh 79

BOOK REVIEWS 91

---

214-15

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 19

NUMBERS 3-4

MARCH-APRIL 1991

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

### Inland

Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250
(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)	

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

15/15 Sarvapriya Vihar  
New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

## NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted to *Social Scientist* should not be under consideration by any other publication. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate, typewritten on one side only, and double-spaced throughout. Footnotes, including comments and references, should be indicated consecutively through the article by raised numerals corresponding to the list of notes placed at the end. They should provide the author's forename and/or initials, title of publication, publisher, place of publication and date of publication. The styles to be adopted for books and journal articles is indicated below:

1. A. Eckstein, China's Economic Relations, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
2. See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', Journal of Comparative Economics, December 1979, pp. 325-45.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
15/15, Sarvapriya Vihar, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial

The Marxist analysis of capitalist development in the Third World has necessarily relied on the classical model of feudalism and capitalism and the process of transition from one to the other. This classical model, elaborated by Marx and developed subsequently by a number of writers, is an abstraction based on the British experience, with its own specificities. This implies that attempts to assess the actual nature of the process of capitalist development in the West as well as in the Third World have to be concerned not merely with the degree of approximation of reality to certain characteristics of the classical model, but also the significance of whatever deviation is visible for the process of capitalist development itself. Thus, as Amiya Kumar Bagchi argues, in his Chintan Memorial Lecture published as the lead article in this issue: 'Lenin's work on the development of capitalism in Russia can be read as a delineation of the peculiarities of that capitalism as well as a demonstration that the system could grow on that social matrix, in spite of, and sometimes, because of, those peculiarities.'

Seen in these terms, it could be argued that capitalism in the Indian context has not yet triumphed over pre-capitalist production relations in most parts of India. Nor have Indian capitalists succeeded in evolving an ideology that has a hegemonic presence in society as a whole. This has not only made the exploitation of workers and peasants more intense, but adversely affected the nature of the capitalist class as well. For example, the rules of closure of capitalists as a group in India, while based on the possession of property, reflects the influence of caste, leading to a situation where the capitalist class itself becomes the bastion of caste and communal ideology. This inadequate development of the capitalist class erodes the thrust for profit through improving productivity, reflected in policies in areas as diverse as literacy and mass education, on the one hand, and indigenous technology generation and foreign technology import, on the other.

The gradualism of capitalist development is influenced by and in turn strengthens the caste system and caste ideology. The origin and consolidation of that system is the concern of the subsequent two articles by Vivekanand Jha and Suvira Jaiswal. Jha suggests that, opinions to the contrary notwithstanding, the evidence favours the view that the *varna* system was a post-Harappan, late-Vedic development. It had definitely not existed in the Harappan period, was not brought to India by any group or wave of Aryans and was an indigenous development that was not a reality in the Rigvedic period.

The consolidation of the *varna* system and the stratification it involved, was ensured by an ideology that held that it was divine in origin, fixed and universal. Occupations had to be hereditary as function and aptitude are determined by birth and these stand in a hierarchical relation sanctified by religion. Suvira Jaiswal argues that the *varna* system and its ideology were not priestly inventions but an expression of the dominant material relationships prevailing in society. Not surprisingly, the ideology pervaded even the Buddhist and the Jain world-views, with the difference that these religions contested the hierarchical position and the higher ritual status of the brahmanas above the kshatriyas. 'The *varna* ideology helped in securing the structured dependence of the landless labour in the form of untouchables or the so-called menial castes and sustained the nexus of jajmani relationship built around the landowner in a petty mode of production.' However, while maintaining its static appearance due to its religious colouring, the *varna* ideology, from time to time, has made adjustments in those spheres where it was in conflict with the material reality. It is this facet which has given it the strength to remain a material force, a formidable impediment to progress.

The next article in this issue presents the views of an influential trend of Marxist thinking in the U.S., which challenges conceptions based on the existence and unity of economics as a discipline. Based on an analysis of the epistemological, methodological and entry-point differences among neoclassical, Keynesian and Marxian schools of thought, the authors (Amariglio, Resnick and Wolff) argue that economics is better seen as a field comprising radically different and competing discourses and that as far as these discourses themselves are concerned, there is more in common between, say, Marxian economic and literary theory, than among Marxian, neoclassical and Keynesian economic theories. Yet, if protagonists of any one discourse seek to define a discipline within which they operate, it is because they use their method as a means of domination and exclusion and marginalisation of other discourses.



AMIYA KUMAR BAGCHI\*

## *Reflections on the Nature of the Indian Bourgeoisie\*\**

In recent times there has been a considerable amount of work on the ideology of the working class and on its behaviour. Some of the young social scientists and historians have found the working class very deficient in some respects. They have been found not to be sufficiently class-conscious. They have been found to be communal in some contexts,<sup>1</sup> and far too attached to their own regions and linguistic and ethnic identities. But the same kind of attention has not been paid by many social scientists to the exploiters of those workers. If the workers have been communal, what has happened to the capitalists? Have they inherited all those secular values which their superior education, their superior property position and their overwhelming advantages in life give them access to? In understanding the growth of capitalism in India, of the kind of capitalism that we have in India, I do think that understanding the behaviour of the capitalist class is extremely important. Even if we cannot always settle why they behave the way they behave, it is important to know how they behave in certain particular contexts, and what kind of ideologies, in a very broad sense seem to motivate them. I find that even though I have not planned it that way, my talk is to some extent complementary to the first talk given by B.T. Ranadive, because he has there talked about the growth of a scientific ideology in India. What I am going to talk about is perhaps the persistence and even the growth of 'unscientific' but locally advantageous ideologies amongst some of the masters of our destiny.

Capitalism as a term has come into general use only after the Marxists used it to characterise and critically analyse the modern societies of Western Europe and the U.S.A. Marx and Engels spent their

---

\* Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

\*\* Text of the Third V.P. Chintan Memorial Lecture delivered at the Indian School of Social Sciences, Madras, on 19 October 1989.

life constructing a theoretical model of capitalism, unravelling its inherent contradictions and suggesting the means of overcoming those contradictions. They indicated a social agency, namely the working class, which in its own collective interest would overcome those contradictions and give birth to a new order of society, namely a socialist society—an order that would be superior to the capitalist system that had been overthrown. However, neither Marx nor Engels ever thought that there was a pure capitalism on earth. They took the British economy and society as their primary object of study. I have to talk about these things because sometimes both the lovers of capitalism and the opponents talk as if somewhere there is pure capitalism—as if all those free market forces really act freely and as if all individuals are free-floating atoms. We have always to understand that they are all the time bounded by various kinds of social forces transcending markets and circumscribing freedom.

Marx and Engels took the British economy and society as their primary object of study mainly because it had in their time progressed farthest in the direction of unfolding of capitalist relations. Even in the case of Britain, as Marx's and Engels' extensive comments on the British political scene demonstrate, aristocratic ideologies and interests of powerful landlords were often mixed up with the pursuit of capitalist goals and diffusion of ideologies more directly associated with capitalism. And not only in Marx and Engels' time, you can see how religion has played havoc with the society of Northern Ireland, which was one of the earliest colonies of the new British capitalist empire. Neither colonialism nor religious wars have gone away because of the flowering of capitalism. If pure capitalism did not obtain even in the Britain of the 1850s and 1860s, it certainly did not exist in other countries of Europe or the United States at that time. Some people take capitalism to be the final flowering of a free social system and this free social system, they think, was just born (like Venus) in Europe and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nothing like that happened. Capitalism was given a more explicit constitutional form in France and the U.S.A. than in England. The hegemony of capitalists or bourgeois ideologies had also been recognised more explicitly in those countries than in Britain. In England, the Parliament was dominated by the class of landlords until 1832. In France, after the French Revolution, the bourgeoisie definitely came to be the dominant force but the monarchy remained. The Americans had to fight a bloody Civil War in the 1860s in order to establish the dominance of industrial capitalism over a slave-holding landlord group. In France, after the revolution of 1789 there were four monarchies and two major civil wars before the claims of capitalism and its most advanced form of governance, i.e., parliamentary democracy, could be firmly established.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Germany had become the most powerful European country, economically speaking. There, the ruling group was a combination of feudalised bureaucrats, military men and business men in combination with a set of aristocrats directing the state apparatus for the goal of maximising the economic and military power of Germany. Germany also had the largest Social Democratic Party professing a Marxist ideology. Explicit codes restricted the political activities of the socialists. A parliamentary set-up existed but with a final veto power exercised by the Kaiser. Germany also contained a capitalist class whose leaders exercised paternalistic control over the workers and the employees. It was not again a society of free capitalists. Landlords and landlords' values, monarchical values were intermingled in it. We have thus the sorry spectacle of the largest Marxist Social Democratic Party then supporting the First World War—a party which was then designated by Lenin as a social imperialist party. We can see that just because something grows for the first time in a country, it does not necessarily triumph. Neither pure capitalism nor a pure working class hegemony could triumph in Germany in 1914.

The point about this sketchy reference to the development of capitalism elsewhere is that while with the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin and other Marxists we have a large body of literature dissecting the anatomy of capitalism, we must remember that the development of that system has not followed any pure lines in any country. Nor did the leaders of the Marxist tradition expect any such purity in the development they had analysed. Lenin's work on the development of capitalism in Russia can be read as a delineation of the peculiarities of that capitalism as well as a demonstration that the system could grow on that social matrix, in spite of, and sometimes, because of, those peculiarities.

Hence, when we turn to a study of Indian capitalism there is no use looking for an ideal type. An ideal type can be used to understand some particular structure at a moment of history, or to explain better the evolution of one slice of reality—but not to capture the complexities of the Indian society as it evolved. The theory and history of capitalism in the North Atlantic seaboard, in the Mediterranean countries and in Japan have been studied far more intensively than in India, or for that matter, in any third world country. In order to gain a comparative perspective, we will have to glance at some European, Japanese and American analogies from time to time. But we must not take the pattern of development in any country as an ideal or norm. For, the serpentine history of capitalism does not permit the illusion that its destructiveness could be eliminated by some optimal social arrangement or development sequence. There is no such entity as optimal capitalism. Capitalism has always been a horrible system

full of very peculiar social formations. And capitalism as it has existed on earth has to be seen as full of these contradictions.

Before capitalism came in as a system anywhere, there were capitalists. The first group of capitalists were the merchants. And there have been merchants in India for a very long time. There have been pockets of wage labour in India, at least since the late eighteenth century, where capitalists controlling the means of production employed wage labour for producing surplus value. But, as we know, this did not produce capitalism in India at that time. Pre-capitalist relations have not fully triumphed over capitalist production relations in most parts of India even today. Labour, specially agricultural labour, and much of labour working in the so-called informal, unorganized or basically low-wage occupations remains bound to employers not only by the cash nexus but also by relations of non-market coercion and dependence. I don't have to remind you of all the bonded labourers, whose numbers are given from time to time in Government of India documents. Every year we hear of bonded labourers who are being freed through political activity in different parts of India. Capitalists have also not succeeded in transforming the structure of the economy decisively. Nor have they succeeded in evolving an ideology that has a hegemonic presence in the whole society. In fact, Indian capitalists continue to harbour ideologies which are largely derived from pre-capitalist social formations. In many other countries such as Japan or Taiwan, capitalism has successfully used pre-capitalist ideologies to consolidate its power. This has in fact made the exploitation of the working class more intense in those countries. The extreme degree of depression that was practised on the Japanese working class and that is still practised on the working class in countries like Taiwan and South Korea will be familiar to many trade unionists.

In India, the prevailing mixture of pre-capitalist and capitalist production relations and ideologies has made the exploitation of workers and peasants no less intense. In many areas, the wage-labourers are still treated like slaves. However, the particular kinds of mixture of modes of exploitation that have dominated the country have made the economic and social space so fragmented and so permeable to the dominance of international capital as to almost cripple the transforming power of capitalism. In Western Europe and in the United States, capitalism did transform the society ultimately in most cases. In India, it is yet to do that in any basic way. The prevailing amalgams of social relations and their messiness have their roots in the history of India as a colonial country, with pre-existing capitalist relations in isolated pockets and newly consolidated pre-capitalist relations in others, and in the contradictory logic of capitalism itself.

We shall briefly look at some parts of the logic of capitalism, especially of industrial capitalism which tends to create problems for capitalist growth everywhere except in some core countries. In most of

the advanced capitalist countries, a putting-out system grew to replace simple commodity production. Before that, artisans used to work in their homes with their own means of production. Then artisans worked with advances from merchants. The artisans were given raw materials, and part of the equipment by the merchant and this was how the putting-out system was born. And then, finally, artisans were brought together as wage labourers into factories and the modern factory system arose. Once capitalism has developed out of this whole complex process, it begins to evolve more and more complicated systems of organisation of production. These latter go hand in hand with the development of machinery which serve at one and the same time as instruments for raising the productivity of labour and strengthening the control of owners of means of production. Once machinery comes in, they became masters of men.

The continued evolution of machine-based techniques of production is in many ways dependent on the production units being located in particular regions. Workers and technicians have to go on experimenting with these methods of production at a particular location. They have to try out new tools and new materials and new designs. They have often to reorganize the production process. They can't do it well if they are moving about all over the place. Even when techniques of production are evolved or adapted in scientific or technological laboratories attached to educational institutions or research institutions, rather than industrial establishments, these laboratories need to be within easy distance of the factories. Moreover, one of the major forces driving productivity-raising innovations is the rise in cost of labour in general, or at least of critical types of skilled labour. This means that for such forces to be effective, the supply of labour to capitalists has to become scarce from time to time. The capitalists should not have access to unlimited supplies of labour for ever if they have to be impelled to introduce labour-saving innovations. The delimitation of the operation of capitalist classes within definite boundaries of national states provided the location-boundedness needed for accumulation of learning and technical development and operated as a strong incentive for continually replenishing the reserve army of labour. Because labour became more and more expensive, within a given location, capitalists had to find new ways of economising labour. Periodic crises led to unemployment of many workers so that they did not have too much bargaining power. However, while this pool of labour was renewed cyclically, in the long run in the regions where capitalist growth really got going, the proportion of the surplus labour or the reserve army to the total labour force tended to decline.

From the very beginning, capitalism was involved in a major contradiction while augmenting labour productivity through economies of agglomeration. By its logic of growth, capital would seek areas of

employment which promised the highest rate of profit—not the highest level of labour productivity. The capitalist does not care whether labour produces more or less. What he bothers about is whether the use of labour produces enough profit for him. This means that the surplus value produced by labour at one location would migrate under the direction of capital and create employment or raise productivity elsewhere if that other location promises more profit. David Ricardo, whom Marx had acknowledged as his master in political economy, knew this. He assumed that capital was not mobile between different countries. And he *recommended* that it should not be so mobile. But this goes against the logic of capitalism itself. So what happened was that capital migrated from one place to another in search of profit. As profit rates declined in one location, capitalists in their drive to maximise profit sought out new locations. In spite of this mobility of capital, in European countries in the nineteenth century a considerable amount of growth took place. The surplus invested in these countries was extracted not only from the European countries, including Britain but also from the colonial countries under European domination. This capital was invested within their own homeland *and* in the settlements overseas where the white workers settled such as the United States, Canada and Australia. So in European countries and in white settler colonies, mobility of capital was consistent with growth of productivity. However, this did not happen in the colonial countries. There the surplus was sucked out and very little new capital was invested in these countries. On the other side, the labour force in these nonwhite colonies continued to grow and remain cheap. It was cheapened not only by the growth of the labour force but also because of the kind of repression to which labour was subjected in all these countries. In the Assamese tea plantations, for example, practically a servile labour process was installed in the nineteenth century. When labour was taken out from India to be employed in Mauritius, Trinidad or Ceylon, again they were treated practically as slaves. And, of course, in South Africa, Asians and black workers are still being treated as very second-class citizens indeed.

In considering the growth of capitalism in India, it has to be borne in mind that bringing about capitalist production relations was not an integral part of the design of capitalist colonialism. The British were themselves capitalists. But they were interested in introducing capitalist relations into India only in so far as they would increase the revenue and profit that would be gathered by the British tributary state and by the British or the European capitalist class in general. The British rulers and capitalists had not come to do any missionary work here. This is sometimes overlooked not only by liberal, but also by Marxist, historians. They tend to assume that because the British were capitalists, they were about to transform India into a capitalist country. They had no such intention. In fact most of the Christian

missionary activities had been stopped by the British in the very beginning when they found that this was interfering with their major goal, which was maximising the total amount of revenue that they would extract from this country. If the peasant-zamindar or peasant-mirasidar relations were altered in some cases so that they resembled capitalist relations, in other respects such alterations strengthened the grip of revenue farmers rather than peasant proprietors. In some cases as in the areas of the Patwardhan lordship in the Maratha territory, the new revenue laws led to the curbing, if not decimation, of an emerging capitalist-landlord stratum. The British in fact effectively hampered the growth of capitalism in many parts of India in the early nineteenth century. It was not only in agriculture that production relations were changed in a way which hindered rather than helped the growth of capitalism and capitalist farmers for much of this period of British rule. In handicrafts industry and trade also British rule led to a decline of merchants associated with those occupations, and even more importantly, of substantial artisans whose counterparts were often emerging as industrialists in Europe.

Marx had talked somewhere about two paths to industrial growth. One is the conventional path, i.e. where merchants become the industrialists and the other which was a more revolutionary path where the producers themselves, the artisans, accumulate enough capital to become the new industrial capitalist. In India there were, in places like Gujarat, quite prosperous artisans such as the Bhavsars, for example. But their occupations are destroyed by the policies that were followed under British rule. Thus not only merchants who were associated with the handicrafts but some of the more prosperous artisans lost their chance of ever evolving into industrial capitalists. We can summarise this part of our argument by saying that India under British rule by and large experienced the short end of the contradictions of capitalism and colonialism—effects which can be described as 'backwash effects' in the terminology of Gunnar Myrdal. This was reflected in the condition of the exploited peasantry, artisanate and the ever-expanding mass of the proletariat and also in the conditions of survival and growth of the indigenous capitalist strata.

The nature of capitalist classes or the extent of their growth is, of course, not synonymous with the nature of capitalism. In order to understand capitalism, we have to understand the other classes also—including the way those classes interact with one another and the way those classes interact with the state apparatus. We cannot in this talk tackle all the complexities of those interactions. What I will do in the rest of the paper is primarily to talk about the behaviour of Indian capitalist classes—all the time remembering that the behaviour of the capitalist system as a whole, or whatever we call the social system that we have in India, will need an analysis of the behaviour of the

workers, the peasants, the landlords and the working of the whole state apparatus.

In Asia and Europe, class society had its origins in distant antiquity. However the class society originated, defining the upper classes required rules of closure. A member of the class of feudal lords in Europe generally required a sign of noble parentage and a recognition from his peers and superiors that he, indeed, possessed the qualities needed to be designated as a nobleman. In India where a Hindu king ruled, he generally acquired the status of Kshatriya, often being formally anointed as such by a Brahman. You know the story of Shivaji's anointment as a Kshatriya king as a member of the Kshatriya caste even though his origins might have been very different. Now although capitalism is supposed to provide equal opportunities for everybody, capitalists everywhere have tried to form exclusive associations. They have had their own rules of closure and these are the rules that I am now going to concentrate on.

In Europe there were guilds or associations of merchants at least from the time of Italian city states of the 13th and 14th centuries. Many of these guilds and associations acquired considerable political power and thereby impeded the growth of other capitalist groups and of capitalist production relations. The breakdown of feudalism in Europe was generally associated with the breakdown of such exclusive guilds or associations. But again with the further growth of capitalism, other exclusive clubs grew up with formal or informal rules of membership and these associations often exercised considerable political power. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce, for example, exercised a notorious degree of influence on British-Indian relationships in the nineteenth century. In India also merchants have their own rules of closure. The first rule, of course, is the possession of property. Without some money, you can't be a merchant. But that's not the only rule that was there. The most basic requirement in most Indian cases of successful entrepreneurship was the membership of particular castes. Even with a change of religion, such castes endured. The Memons and Bohras, for example, who were converted to Islam from Hindu trading caste form very distinct groups among Muslims and many of the successful Muslim merchants belong to these two communities. I came across some very powerful Memon merchants in Madras in the late nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Of course, not all Memons and Bohras were merchants, just as not all Marwaris or Nattukottai Chettiers are merchants. It is also not true that only the people belonging to the so called mercantile castes could be merchants. There were Brahmins or Kshatriyas or people belonging to non-Vaishya castes who were merchants. The Nadars of Tamil Nadu illustrate the rise of a caste, through the utilisation of new opportunities, to the status of wealthy merchants. But generally speaking, throughout India, you could identify mercantile groups with specific castes or sub-castes. There were also mercantile associations



which cut across caste and community. In Ahmedabad and Surat, for example, there were many associations which straddled castes and communities. But despite all this, by and large, over the centuries you find a surprising degree of persistence of some particular castes as merchants.

When capitalists from Europe invaded other lands and sought to dominate and rule them they evolved new rules of closure for themselves. The most blatant of these was derived from a racialist ideology. Racism, and to a lesser extent, religion were used to differentiate the conquered from the conquerors, the blacks from the whites—and keep the former in a socially, economically and politically inferior position. When the rulers belonged to a capitalist nation as the British did, for example, and introduced bourgeois laws with formal equality of treatment before law they had to frame special rules to guard the privileges of the rulers, such as for example, that only European juries could try Europeans. But apart from passing such laws, the ruling capitalist groups organised themselves in formal or informal associations or clubs to which only whites would be admitted. The Madras Chamber of Commerce, for example throughout the 19th century hardly had any Indian members. In India, this discriminatory treatment operated in different ways in different regions because of the differences in the circumstances under which the capitalists from Britain or other European countries operated and the differences in the competitive power of the Indian capitalist groups. For example, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Bengali capitalists in Bengal and Parsi capitalists in Bombay were in a subordinate position but they collaborated with the British and, of course, competed with them in many mercantile activities. By contrast, in the early part of the nineteenth century, in Madras there were practically no big capitalists who were either collaborating or competing with the British.

This situation changed over the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century Bombay still presented the most cosmopolitan picture so far as large-scale trade and the emerging cotton mill industry was concerned; there we find the Europeans and Indians represented in the direction of many companies. Bengali capitalists had disappeared practically from all large-scale trade. In eastern India, the Marwaris had not yet appeared as the big traders. And in Madras a new group of Indian merchants were thrusting forward. When Arbuthnot & Co., for example, collapsed in 1906, most of the gains in market shares were made not by the British groups there but by new Indian mercantile groups. This is where the differences in the social or production relations as between different regions come into the picture. We cannot analyse the effect of behaviour of capitalists without analysing the social relations which surround them. If we take the development of modern industry in South India and contrast it with that in Bengal, for

example, we find that British rule initially had a disastrous effect on every section of South Indian society (unlike in Bengal where some collaborating groups seem to have prospered at first). Demographic disasters struck Madras at the end of the 18th century and continued to operate down to the 1870s. There is work by Ronald Lardinois which shows that Madras was experiencing depopulation in the early part of nineteenth century. In the 1830s famines wiped out one-third of the population of the district of Guntur for example. This kind of situation continued till the 1870s when southern India experienced one of the worst famines in Indian history. After this period, southern India seems to have recovered demographically and even prospered, in so far as it makes sense to talk about prosperity of any but the top five per cent of the population in those days. When we are talking about prosperity we are really talking about some of the merchants, some of the big peasants and so on.

The factors which made this kind of recovery possible had to do with the internal social structure of Madras. The British in their greed to extract as much revenue as possible had introduced ryotwari system in most parts of the Madras Presidency. That had given them a lot of revenue—more revenue than in Bengal as a proportion of total agricultural output. But in the process zamindars and mirasidars had disappeared from most parts of Madras. That released the forces of capitalism to a greater extent than in Bengal where the zamindars continued to dominate the countryside. An external factor was added to this development. South Indian merchants went out to Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indo-China and Burma and made profits there which were invested in India. These developments led in the twentieth century to the growth of modern industry in places like Coimbatore and later on in other parts of the Madras Presidency. Such a burst of indigenous capitalist growth did not occur in eastern India. In Bengal and Bihar the British continued to dominate practically all large-scale industry and trade and the new types of industries that came up were controlled by them. They took out most of the surplus from these enterprises and reinvested very little locally; the political power of the British in that region had to be removed before Indian capitalists could come in. The Marwaris did not really take over from the British as the biggest capitalist group in eastern India until the end of the Second World War. Here we can see a complex of international factors and internal factors acting to differentiate the rates of growth of Indian capitalists in two different regions of India under British rule.

In colonial India a very large number of factors operated against the growth of capitalist relations in society. The British themselves had preserved revenue farming in many parts of India and did not allow capitalist farming to grow fast. They extracted a major part of the surplus out of India and invested it elsewhere. The growth of the Indian home market as a result, was continually hampered. A policy of

'one way free-trade' (to borrow R.P. Dutt's phrase) was followed. All these factors led to the underdevelopment of productive forces in the country, and also led to the underdevelopment of the capitalist classes. If Indian capitalists could garner only a small proportion of the surplus how could they fatten themselves? With the removal of British rule many of these circumstances changed—but not all of them. The grosser forms of revenue farming were abolished everywhere in independent India. The zamindari system was abolished in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and in those parts of the Madras Presidency where there was a formal zamindari system as Pudukottai and Ramand. The home market was protected for all capitalists operating within the borders of the country. Large public work programmes in irrigation, power supply and transport networks were undertaken in order to provide the infrastructure needed for economic growth. However, as countless analysts have pointed out, the socio-economic transformation was halted by vested class and factional interests before it had really got going. Peasant proprietorship of land remains a dream and not even a proximate goal in most states of India. With the partial exception of Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and perhaps Karnataka, Punjab and Haryana, landlordism stalks the Indian countryside. The mass of the population remains illiterate. One point that I have to stress again and again is that no country in the world has as yet experienced a high rate of industrial growth without abolishing illiteracy. Our leaders have grandiosely talked about 'hi-tech' and the 21st century. But an illiterate population is not a base on which a thriving industrial future can be built. Infant technologies and design expertise developed in public research laboratories and public sector enterprises and consultancy firms are throttled by the unprincipled import of foreign expertise and the deliberate fostering of dominance of trans-national capital. Trade Unions remain fragmented and ineffective over vast areas of economic activity, leading to an erosion of the bargaining strength of the working class. This also erodes the thrust for profit through improving productivity. Rising wages would have induced capitalists acting in their own interests to try to upgrade the technologies used by the workers. Indian capitalists by and large continue to use workers in sweat-shops where they have very little equipment to work with. One major reason for this state of affairs is that the levels of wages, outside a few enclaves of organised industry and finance, remain extremely low. I would like to stress that the behaviour of the Indian capitalist class is an important factor impeding Indian economic and social development. Of course, as pointed out earlier, capitalist groups are not fully autonomous, free to act as they like. Their behaviour is shaped by their perception of the environment but that behaviour is a very important part of the environment itself whether they perceive it that way or not.

Let me take up some aspects of capitalist behaviour in India for a more critical look. First of all, most Indian capitalist groups have not got out of the swaddling clothes and the associated behaviour that attended their infancy. Shaped by rules of closure of caste, they remain wedded to casteist and communal ideologies. What protected them and distinguished them from the rest of Indian society at one stage still makes them erect barriers against the entry of competitors into their cherished preserves. Unless the Vaishyas had their special rules, they would have been swamped under the pre-independence autocratic regimes. They would have been swamped also by the metropolitan capitalists: they could not have competed with the British, even on the unequal basis that they did in many areas. But those rules of closure now protect them against the entry of new groups which could have quickened the growth of capitalism in India.

Secondly, their behaviour is shaped by racism in very complicated ways. I have argued earlier (and I have developed this argument in much more detail in earlier writings)<sup>3</sup> that racism was part of the formative ideology of capitalist colonialism. And it operated in a colonial dependency such as India not only to differentiate the rulers from the ruled, but also, more particularly, the capitalist groups from Europe and North America, from Indian or Asian capitalists in general. It led to very anomolous or even funny situations. The *Times of India Directory and Almanac* of the nineteenth century provided lists of Indian and European firms. And so take one year at random in the *Directory of the Times of India of 1882-83*, the Sassoon firms or the Jewish firms in general are categorised as European firms. These Sassoons or most other Jews so categorized came from West Asia and they were just a generation old. Elias David Sassoon was still alive in the 1860s and 1870s when the firms controlled by his sons and other relations began to be characterised as European firms. This happened because these Jews had connections in Europe and therefore by ascription they were regarded as Europeans. So you have this funny situation of people of Asian origin through and through being characterized as Europeans. This kind of racial differentiation was very prevalent in all commercial dealings in India. Such differentiation had real implications because the Sassoons very soon took most of their capital out of India. They were one of the first groups originating in India which organised an international bank—the Eastern Bank—which began to operate as a foreign bank on Indian soil. The Sassoons were truly the predecessors of the non-resident Indians (NRIs) today. The NRIs went out of India and when they come back and operate in India, they behave like foreign firms.

Most Indian upper-class groups continued unquestioningly to accept the superiority of the whites even after independence as far as commercial, military and technical power was concerned. It is only by such supposition that one can explain the continued tolerance of many

ill-educated Europeans in supervisory positions of firms that had by then been acquired by Indians. For example, in the Indian Iron & Steel Co., which went sick, a bunch of rather incompetent Europeans were in charge throughout the 1960s. At that time everybody except the directors of the company knew what was happening—or rather, what was not happening—in that firm. Such examples can be given from many jute companies and many mining companies in Eastern India. Then you look at the number of foreign collaboration agreements that India signed with Britain. By the end of the 1950s, Britain had become technologically backward compared with other OECD countries. But even in the 1960s when Japan and Western Germany, let alone the United States were far ahead of Britain in most of the production technologies, the largest number of collaboration agreements entered into by Indian firms was with British firms. And this was again due, at least partly, to a sense of colonial inferiority from which many Indian capitalists suffered. This feeling was not confined to capitalists. This was shared by many of our top bureaucrats; some of whom were much more deferential to the white men than even our capitalists who after all counted their money and had to have some degree of accuracy in their calculations.

The continued distrust of home-grown experts and technologists on the part of Indian firms also had partly the same kind of origin.

When we look around we find that especially in Africa, members of the Indian upper class generally adopted a racist attitude towards blacks of other countries. The troubles faced by Indian businessmen in East Africa were partly due to this attitude. That the new political regimes often opposed Indian exclusiveness with their own chauvinism and revanchism did not justify the unthinking racism of the immigrant communities.

The exclusivist attitude of Indian capitalist groups had some positive aspects as far as Indian development was concerned. Most of them continued to regard India as their home. So there was not much flight of capital from India, say in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Some of the profits of Indian enterprise abroad were also remitted to India. However, as Indian private capital grew in strength and, paradoxically enough, at the same time they failed to mould the Indian environment to suit the needs of long-term capitalist growth, they began to look overseas for investment of capital. As the Indian capitalists grew in number and strength overseas, they looked less and less upon India as their home. They continued to be excluded from the top clubs of European, American and Japanese capitalists, but they could organise their own ghettos and operate from there. This 'internationalized domestic capital' (to borrow a phrase from Latin America) could no play at both ways. Capitalists belonging to that group could act as intermediaries for the political bosses and top capitalists in India in foreign deals. They could also act as

intermediaries of foreign firms without a strong presence in India when the latter wanted to set up a base of operations in this country. So the exclusivist Indian capitalists turned collaborationists and acted as major agents for transfer of capital from India to other countries. These non-resident Indian capitalists act also as a major pressure group forcing India into an unplanned liberalisation programme and thus threatening to embroil the country in a debt trap.<sup>4</sup> By now India has somewhere around 60 billion dollars of foreign debt which comes to about 96,000 crores of rupees. Most of that debt has been contracted during the last four years—during the period of so-called liberalisation and opening up of the economy. And in all these deals not only transnational banks but our own home-grown Indian capitalists, both officially non-resident and officially resident, have played a very important role.

Throughout all these changes, Indian capital did not turn secular or embrace democratic values. The ideologies they profess are mostly backward-looking. Sometimes they ape the most reactionary ideologies emanating from the advanced capitalist countries. Many of them do not understand that they cannot be applied to India even for fostering the growth of capitalism. Some of them are aware of the inappropriateness of the message of free trade to the Indian situation and will, to protect their own narrow self-interest, oppose any thoroughgoing move for free trade. But free trade is a good slogan with which to counter the struggles for genuine freedom waged by the ordinary Indians, capitalist groups, and media under their control, cynically exploit that slogan in order to deflect the attention of the struggling people from the real issues. The acolytes of Milton Friedman, for example, have been entertained frequently by some Indian chamber of commerce or other. They are invited to give lectures to the Indian public, as if they have a message to give to our politicians.

Sheltering under the undemocratic power wielded by landlordism, many fractions of capital remain casteist and communalist to the core. I will cite two recent (this was written in 1989) examples from Calcutta. It was a group of north Indian traders who wanted to celebrate the anniversary of the burning of Roop Kunwar in Deorala in the Sati temple maintained by them. Again very recently, the first puja of Ramshila for the infamous project of erecting a temple at the mythical site of Ram Janmabhoomi (and the actual site of Babri Masjid) was performed in a temple maintained by the same group of north Indian traders. The support given by traders and many capitalists in North India to the murderously communalist politics of the B.J.P. and V.H.P. (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) became far more blatant in 1990. Even big capitalist groups such as the Birlas have extended their financial and moral support to these elements. For example, schools under the control of the Birla group in Calcutta gave a special reception to L.K. Advani.

More than a hundred years back, Marx had written, in reference to merchant capital, that its existence and development to a certain level are historical premises for the development of capitalist production. He cautioned, however, that its development is by itself incapable of promoting genuine capitalism and explaining the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This formulation still remains valid today but it has to be interpreted in the light of our particular circumstances. Indian ruling classes in their urge for self-preservation at any cost have erected formidable obstacles against the development of industrial capitalism in India. Indian agriculture in many parts of the country remains locked in semi-feudal relations. Outside a few enclaves of organized industry and finance, Indian labour faces extreme repression whenever it tries to set up effective unions.<sup>5</sup> Indian technologists see their efforts being continually subverted by the touts of foreign enterprises. Indian civil law remains fragmented into myriad divisions of religious injunction.

Some years back, in the controversy over the Shah Bano case, the Congress(I) government at the Centre instituted a particularly retrograde variant of Muslim personal law against the opposition of many sections of Muslim opinion and the opposition of all politically active women and at one blow made the position of Muslim women in India inferior to that of Muslim men. At that time I found many of the Hindu communalists very enthusiastic in opposition to the enactment of the Muslim personal law because they thought that if this was Muslim law, they could show how Muslim law as such was inimical to the welfare of ordinary people. What nobody talks about is that Hindu law remains tied to the apron strings of religion and extremely subdivided, varying in different parts of the country. It is with the help of the Mitakshara law what many of the Indian capitalist groups and property-owners protect their property in legal and semi-legal ways. And these laws go against most of the rules of bourgeois logic. As yet there is no move among all these enthusiasts for bringing back Muslim personal law into the general arena of civil law to bring all the Hindus under the umbrella of a non-religious civil law meant for all Indians. To my sorrow and surprise, most of my radical friends also have not yet really voiced this demand as strongly as they should have done.

Big Indian capitalists by and large remain casteist, communalist, collaborationist, authoritarian, and thrive by corruptly utilizing governmental machinery. They behave like short-sighted merchants even when they control large factories. The few who try to behave as industrial capitalists and exploit the home-market, for increasing output and making productivity gains are all the time hobbled by myopic governmental policies favouring collaboration with foreign capital on unequal terms. There is plenty of evidence from Eastern India in areas such as drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering, ceramics and metallurgy that the more progressive and more nationally oriented

forms of industrial capital have been again and again overwhelmed by the less progressive and more collaborationist forms.<sup>6</sup> This situation applies to many other parts of India. The fostering of a reactionary ideology has all the time been accompanied by the reproduction of social relations that has made this possible. The government has now allowed the development of a highly speculative capital market which can be manipulated by unscrupulous wheeler-dealers to the detriment of real industrial progress.<sup>7</sup> An attack on the degraded society built by merchant capital, the newly-emerging finance capital and landlords in India requires a frontal assault on the whole ideology of casteism, communalism and collaborationism spread by them and cannot be confined simply to bargaining for higher wages in a few sectors of the country.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: West Bengal 1890-1940*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989. For a critique see A.K. Bagchi, 'Working Class Consciousness', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (3), 28 July 1990, 'Review of Political Economy', PE-54 to PE-60.
2. A.K. Bagchi, *The Presidency Banks and the Indian Economy 1876-1914*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1989, p. 51.
3. A.K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972, Chapter 6; A.K. Bagchi, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982, Chapters 2-4.
4. For an analysis of the policies which international capital and internationalised domestic capital has sought to foist on third world countries, see A.K. Bagchi, 'The IMF view of international economic policy and the relevance of Sraffa's critique of economic theory', in K. Bharadwaj and B. Schefold (eds.), *Essays on Piero Sraffa*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1990.
5. For an analysis of the attitudes of capitalists to workers and the treatment received by the latter in the industrially booming state of Gujarat, see J. Breman, 'Even dogs are better off: the ongoing battle between capital and labour in the cane fields of Gujarat', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 17(4), July 1990, pp. 446-608.
6. Siddhartha Ghosh, 'Jantrarasik H. Bose' (in Bengali), *Ekkhan*, Shorash Barsha, 3-4 Sankha, Sharadiya 1390 B.S. (1983 AD); Siddhartha Ghosh, 'Upendra Kishore: Shilpi o Karigar' (in Bengali), *Ekkhan*, Shorash Barsha, 6 Sankhya, Sharadiya 1391 B.S. (1984 AD); Sudip Chaudhuri, *Bengal Chemical 1892-1977: Growth and Decline of an Indigenous Enterprise* (mimeo.), paper presented at the National Workshop on Sick Industries Syndrome in India, Gandhian Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, 1988; and A.K. Bagchi, 'Wealth and Work in Calcutta, 1860-1921', in S. Chaudhuri (ed.), *Calcutta, the Living City*, Vol. I, *The Past*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 212-23.
7. S.K. Barua and V. Raghunathan, 'Soaring stock prices defying fundamentals', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (46), 17 November 1990, pp. 2559-62.



ivory carving; wheel-turned, well-fired pottery, generally plain, but also often provided with a slip over which are painted designs in black pigment; hand-modelled terracottas of graceful human and animal figurines; brick laying and masonry on a vast scale; and the manufacture of exquisite seals, cotton textiles, boats, carts, etc.<sup>16</sup> A large number of full-time city-based specialist artisans producing a variety of articles of high artistic merit for the relatively affluent privileged strata as well as for export, their rural counterparts also engaging in crafts relating to stone, clay, shell, bone, metals and textiles;<sup>17</sup> and a substantial work force comprising wood-cutters, fuel burners, grain-pounders, carters, street and drain cleaners, waste removers and slaves<sup>18</sup> are among the other distinct features of the Mature urban phase of the Harappa Culture.

The overwhelming impression is that of a highly complex socio-economic structure with the city holding a central and commanding position *vis-a-vis* the countryside which it dominated and exploited, and a definite stratification along class lines within the city itself with the privileged ruling elite enjoying unequal wealth, power and prestige in relation to the mass of common people.<sup>19</sup> There are no doubt serious differences of opinion regarding the actual composition of the ruling class. To take only a few examples, V. Gordon Childe thinks that a 'ruler' dwelt in the citadels at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro; includes among the ruling class princes, priests, merchants, officials and scribes; and maintains that superstitions must have played an enormous role in consolidating and maintaining social institutions and economic arrangements.<sup>20</sup> Stuart Piggott, A.L. Basham, D.D. Kosambi, Bridget and Raymond Allchin, Ildiko Puskas and Irfan Habib are inclined to agree. Thus Piggott speaks of a state ruled by priest kings, wielding autocratic and absolute power, controlling production and distribution, and levying tolls and customs.<sup>21</sup> Basham refers to a single centralized theocratic state and continuity of government throughout the life of the civilisation.<sup>22</sup> Kosambi pinpoints the curiously weak mechanism of violence and the use of religion as an ideology by the dominant priests to extract tribute from the traders (who were allowed freedom to amass considerable wealth on their own) and to appropriate social surplus and maintain the class structure.<sup>23</sup> Bridget and Raymond Allchin attest the presence of priest kings or a priestly oligarchy, who controlled the religious life, economy and civil government and functioned as administrators as well.<sup>24</sup> Puskas locates supreme power in the priests' hands.<sup>25</sup> Irfan Habib underlines a combination of gods, superstitions and priests binding the rulers and the ruled alike in an awesome dread of change.<sup>26</sup> R.S. Sharma, on the other hand, excludes the priests completely from the category of rulers and gives the pride of place to the traders.<sup>27</sup> Without categorically refuting the likelihood of priests wielding power, K. Antonova, G. Bongard-Levin and G. Kotovsky also visualize the possibility of

power in the Harappan cities being of a republican, oligarchic variety.<sup>28</sup> There is disagreement about the actual position of urban craftsmen as well. While Puskas<sup>29</sup> and R.S. Sharma<sup>30</sup> have no doubt regarding urban craftsmen being a part of the ruling class, Childe associates them with the modest urban dwellings of the lower strata,<sup>31</sup> even though they were to a large extent producing 'for the market'.<sup>32</sup> In a recent article Massimo Vidale expresses the opinion that craft production was under the political control of the urban elites of the Harappa Culture.<sup>33</sup> Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky find the presence of both impoverished and prosperous artisans within the precincts of the cities.<sup>34</sup> The class character of the Mature Harappa Culture is, however, generally recognized.<sup>35</sup>

Stretching the evidence to make out the existence of caste and untouchability as well in the Harappa Culture, on the other hand, does not seem to have adequate basis. Iravati Karve, a sociologist, first referred to the probability of 'something very like castes' at Harappa and a street exclusively occupied by a 'caste-like group' which had specialized in pounding rice there.<sup>36</sup> She also loosely spoke of untouchability as a characteristic of the caste structure from top to bottom.<sup>37</sup> Following her, S.C. Malik, another sociologist, imagined the 'roots' of caste and the 'perpetuation of caste status by birth' in Harappan society.<sup>38</sup> 'Caste class patterns', in his opinion, developed in the socio-economic organization at Harappa and the incoming Aryans adopted them in the process of being Indianized.<sup>39</sup> That Malik is not at all serious about the use of the term 'class' here may be gauged from his reference to 'the emergence of complex socio-economic classes' comprising 'the rich and the poor' in the Harappa Culture along with the clarification that 'this is not in the sense of class consciousness or an interclass struggle'.<sup>40</sup> And Malik's reference to caste in the Harappan context evoked from A. Ghosh, a much more perceptive, mature and balanced scholar, the apt comment that such hurling of institutions from the known to the unknown to suggest their origin and bringing them down from the unknown to the known to prove their persistence does not carry conviction.<sup>41</sup> Suvira Jaiswal, too, questioned the propriety of Malik's tagging caste with the existence of class differences reflected in the settlement pattern of the Harappan cities, which survived even after the cities themselves had disappeared.<sup>42</sup> The concentration of various crafts in specific quarters or streets being a normal feature of the Oriental towns up to the present day has been underscored by several scholars.<sup>43</sup> Significantly in his edited work, *Determinants of Social Status in India*,<sup>44</sup> which is presumed to reflect 'a multi-faceted trans-disciplinary approach to the structure of society from ancient history to contemporary times in the Indian subcontinent',<sup>45</sup> neither Malik in his Introductory paper 'Determinants of Social Status in India: Problems and Issues',<sup>46</sup> nor any other contributor makes a single reference to caste in the Harappan context.

That Malik's view of History as a discipline is singularly narrow—almost myopic—is evident from his observation in the Introduction to another edited work, *Indian Civilization: The First Phase—Problems of A Sourcebook*,<sup>47</sup> that historical generalizations are normally arrived at by scrutinizing individual facts that are not amenable to any rational systematic analysis and that historians formulate general propositions, rather tentatively, citing a few instances.<sup>48</sup>

Among the serious and eminent historians Romila Thapar has supported the hypothesis put forward by Karve and Malik regarding caste and untouchability in some of her writings. Avowedly taking 'the help of social anthropology'—not historical evidence—she notes the probability of caste as a pre-Aryan system and part of the social stratification in the Harappa Culture, where a small group may have preserved itself through strict endogamous marriage, claimed ritual purity and higher status, and also exercised authority in a hierarchical social set-up based on a division of labour with the notion of pollution attaching to certain groups of menial workers.<sup>49</sup> She even talks of 'service relationships' on the pattern of the hereditary *jajmani* system and finds in caste the answer to the vexed question as to who was in authority and how that authority was maintained in the Harappa Culture.<sup>50</sup> The detailed reconstruction in the absence of corresponding tangible data in the material finds to support it can only be regarded as exceedingly speculative, for although the notion of ritual impurity may be exemplified by the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro and the existence of separate quarters for grain-pounders (a non-polluting vocation in itself) at Harappa is admitted, evidence of division of labour and occupational groups on the basis of ritual purity and impurity is wanting and there is no trace of the continuity of caste and untouchability in either the Late Harappa period or their transition to the Rigvedic period.<sup>51</sup> The material culture in the post-Harappan Vedic period (c. 1500–500 BC), for which we have copious literary evidence in the Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (they represent a sort of transition from prehistory to history), is glaringly different and comparatively much less advanced. This long period, too, can be divided into two distinct phases—Rigvedic (c. 1500–1000 BC) and Later Vedic (c. 1000–500 BC). The *Rigveda*, comprising ten *mandalas* (books), is widely accepted as containing two broad strata of historical layers, the earlier represented by Books II–VII and the later by Books I and VIII–X.

The hymns portray the Aryans as first and foremost a warlike people driving horse-drawn chariots and using weapons of *ayas* (copper or bronze) effectively against their non-Aryan foes in the land of the seven rivers. Professional fighters organized in separate tribal groups, they continuously fought internecine wars as well. Booty or spoils of war (*lotra*)<sup>52</sup> formed an important means of their livelihood. They also engaged in primarily pastoral<sup>53</sup> and subsidiary agricultural

pursuits, their agriculture being subsistence-oriented. Using ox-yoked plough (*langala*, *sira*) with wooden ploughshare (*phala*) and such other implements as hoe (*khanitra*), axe (*parasu*, *vrikna*), sickle (*datra*, *sriṇi*), etc., they produced *yava* (barley).<sup>54</sup> Leather strap for the plough (*varatra*), furrow (*sita*, *sunu*), terms for field (*ksetra*, *urvara*) and ploughman (*kinasa*) are mentioned. Since most of the references to agriculture are found in the admittedly late Books I and VIII–X and a hymn in Book IV (57.1–8), which is considered an interpolation, agrarian economy obviously stabilized towards the close of the Rigvedic period.

The absence of evidence for the sale, transfer, mortgage or gift of land or its disposal in any other way makes individual ownership of land at this stage doubtful. The kin-based tribe, Rigvedic *vis* or *jana*,<sup>55</sup> whose members were normally on the move and temporarily dwelt at one particular place, appears to have collectively owned both the cattle and the land and worked together in the fields. Iron being unknown at this stage and tilling the virgin land being by all means an arduous task, the whole tribe toiled to produce barley.

Scholars differ seriously about the use of hired extra-tribal labour, especially slaves, in these limited agricultural operations. R.S. Sharma firmly and consistently argues in his writings that slavery in the *Rigveda* was purely domestic, that slaves, mostly women captured in wars, were used for replenishing the depleting Aryan ranks through begetting children and for household chores, and that the *Rigveda* does not have any term for wage or wage-earners.<sup>56</sup> A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith<sup>57</sup> and Basham,<sup>58</sup> on the other hand, assert that the Dasas were in many cases reduced to slavery and hence the word *dasa* has the sense of 'slave' in several passages of the *Rigveda*. P.V. Kane in his monumental *History of Dharmasāstra* cites a Rigvedic passage referring to the gift of a hundred *dasas* in the sense of slaves.<sup>59</sup> In Dev Raj Chanana's opinion the Aryans must have known debt slavery, slavery as a result of defeat in gambling and war slavery before their advent into this country and quite a few Dasas may have been enslaved and almost any service demanded from them.<sup>60</sup> Kosambi holds the view that just as cattle were herded in common and fields were tilled in common, the *dasa* was also used as common tribal property in the *Rigveda*.<sup>61</sup> Romila Thapar presupposes the employment of non-kin *dasa* labour in the householding economy of the *Rigveda*.<sup>62</sup> According to Irfan Habib, the *dasas* worked like cattle on the field and tended the herds.<sup>63</sup> R.N. Nandi, too, attests the use of non-kin *dasa* labourers in barley fields.<sup>64</sup>

Only a few crafts were practised in the post-urban rural milieu of the *Rigveda*, which mentions the *karmara* (metalsmith), the *taksan* or *tastri* (carpenter), the *carmamna* (tanner) and the *vaya* (weaver). The *karmara* smelted the metal ore in fire (hence the designation *dhmatri* or smelter) and made household utensils, tools and weapons of

copper or bronze. The *taksan* or *tastri* built chariots for war,<sup>65</sup> prepared vessels, buckets, sacrificial ladles and bedsteads of wood and engaged in carving. The *carman* tanned hide (*carman*) from which were manufactured bowstrings, slings, reins and bags. Cotton being unknown, the *vaya* (weaver) prepared woollen cloth. Common words for these artisans in several Indo-European languages suggest that the Rigvedic Aryans did not learn these crafts on the Indian soil. The Rigvedic word for potter (*kulala*) has, however, no parallels in other Indo-European languages; this may indicate the adoption of local traditions in pottery.

The products of craftsmen's labour and skill do not appear to have been meant for sale or collection in the form of taxes and in view of the unavailability of surplus to support them they probably engaged in food production as well. The evidence of a Rigvedic hymn composer calling himself a poet, his father a physician and his mother a grinder of corn<sup>66</sup> suggests that the indispensable division of labour had not advanced beyond a point and specialization had not become hereditary. In view of the usefulness of their work, the artisans were respected members of the Aryan *vis*. Characterizing their relationship with other members of the tribe as *jajmani*<sup>67</sup> is perhaps too bold. The economy was not yet fully or even primarily agrarian; craftsmen and peasants were not two compartmentalized categories; and their mutual relationship in a semi-sedentary set-up was not hereditary, subsisting from generation to generation.

Also the surplus produced in this predominantly pastoral Rigvedic economy was not substantial enough to undermine the broadly egalitarian tribal structure or to lead to the development of classes.<sup>68</sup> The Rigvedic tribal chief had hardly any regular or fixed source of income in the form of cereal or cattle on which he could flourish along with his priests. The term *bali* occurs in the *Rigveda* in the sense of a voluntary offering or present from tribesmen to their chief. Occasional exaction of tributes from the conquered people and spoils of war were the other sources of his income, but since resources were not adequate to maintain a regular army, he had to share these in periodic communal sacrifices with members of the tribe who formed the militia. The institution of mutual gifts also checked the growth of economic disparity and there was no leisured class living off the surplus of others. Differentiation within the tribe had, however, begun and the tribal chiefs and priests were not only claiming and enjoying superior ranks, they also received the major share of the spoils of war in the form of slaves, animals, weapons and ornaments and enjoyed a somewhat better economic position.

The term *varna* occurs in the *Rigveda* a number of times and is initially used to distinguish Arya from Dasa and Dasyu. The difference may initially have been both ethnic and cultural.<sup>69</sup> The words *brahmana* and *ksatriya* occur fifteen and nine times respectively

in the text, often in the sense of open and fluid functional categories, but the word *varna* is never used in connection with them. Neither kingship nor priesthood appears to have depended merely on birth or heredity at this stage and there is no evidence of restrictions as regards partaking of food or marriage. The sudra occurs only once in the *purusasukta*<sup>70</sup> in Book X and that also along with the brahmana, the rajanya and the vaisya (the two latter too occur for the first time here). Here the sudra is stated to have sprung from the feet of the *Purusa* or Primeval Being, unlike the brahmana who sprang from the mouth, the rajanya who sprang from the arms and the vaisya who sprang from the thighs. Significantly the word *varna* is not used in this context. Also there is a consensus among scholars that Book X belongs to the latest stratum of the *Rigveda* and virtually synchronizes with the Later Vedic texts. Evidently *varna* in the *Rigveda* did not have the sense it came to acquire later. The fourfold *varna* system had definitely not been brought to India by any group or wave of Aryans. It was an indigenous development and was not a reality in the Rigvedic period.<sup>71</sup> Certainly contact with peoples is not tabooed and there is not even a semblance of untouchability in the text.<sup>72</sup>

The Later Vedic period (c. 1000–500 BC), information pertaining to which is based not only on the post-Rigvedic texts, but also on the archaeological finds of the Painted Grey Ware culture synchronizing both in time and region with it,<sup>73</sup> furnishes evidence of all-round material progress. Victories in wars and penetration to new areas in the east brought large tracts of Uttar Pradesh, north Bihar, parts of Rajasthan, besides Punjab and Haryana, under the political and cultural sway of the Aryans. Forests were extensively burnt and land was cleared for cultivation to meet the needs of an expanding population. Economy became primarily agrarian. Besides barley, rice, wheat, millet, lentils, several kinds of pulses, sesamum and linseed were produced. References to the use of large and heavy ploughs, to which six, eight, twelve and even twenty-four oxen were yoked, and *paviravani* or *pavirava* in the sense of metal ploughshare occur in Later Vedic literature. The lone evidence of iron ploughshare from Jakhera in Etah district of Uttar Pradesh has, however, been assigned by R.S. Sharma<sup>74</sup> to the close of the period. It seems that hard wood (*khadira*, *udumbara*) ploughshares were used for deep digging to get better yield. Intensive cultivation, application of manure (*karisa*, *sakrit* and *sakan*), practice of irrigation and better knowledge of seasons contributed to increase in production and sufficient surplus to make possible the emergence of classes. Ownership of land devolved from the tribe to families under patriarchal heads and the process of disintegration of the Aryan tribes began.

Crafts, too, proliferated. The *rathakara*, distinct from the *taksan*, appeared as a professional craftsman for the first time. The profession of *karmara* became enormously important, for he began to manufacture

iron (*syama* or *krisna ayas*) artifacts on a modest scale about 900 BC or a little later.<sup>75</sup> Although the early use of iron was largely confined to weapons of war such as spearheads, arrowheads, etc., found at the excavated Painted Grey Ware sites, the role of iron axe in clearing forests for cultivation in thick vegetation areas of the middle and lower Ganga basin in the seventh century BC is incontrovertible.<sup>76</sup> *Ayastapa* (heater of metal, iron or bronze) and *kosakari* are mentioned in the texts; bellows appear to have been used at Atranjikhhera; and two furnaces for smelting iron and forging objects from it were found at Suneri village in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan towards the close of the period.<sup>77</sup> Increase in ksatriya or rajanya power and transformation of the Rigvedic tribal chiefs into relatively strong monarchs ruling over the first territorial kingdoms of the period may have been due to their exclusive possession and use of iron weapons.<sup>78</sup> Extensive use of bows and arrows not only in wars but also in hunting led to the development of the specialized crafts of the bowmaker (*dhanvakrit/dhanvakara*), arrowmaker (*isukrita, isukara*) and the maker of bowstring (*jyakara*). The jeweller (*manikara*) and worker in gold (*hiranyakara*), too, make their appearance. The texts furnish more details about leather work (*carmanya*). Predominance of women in weaving, dyeing, embroidery, basket making and thorn working is reflected in terms like *vayitri, rajayitri, pesakari, bidalakari* and *kantakikari* respectively. Washing, too, had given rise to a professional category in which both men (*malaga*) and women (*vasahpalpuli*) participated. Some of the craftsmen and craftswomen apparently belonged to non-Aryan segments. The *rathakara*, the *taksan* and the *karmara* were treated with utmost esteem and consideration owing to the immense value of their crafts for wars, agriculture and general social comforts in a predominantly rural setting. The king visited their houses to perform certain ceremonies in course of sacrifices to show them respect and ensure their support. There is definitely no trace of any stigma attaching to any craft. Some of these crafts may have tended to become hereditary, though there is no textual reference to occupational *jatis* at this stage.

Division of labour and specialization of functions evidently made definite headway during the period. Agriculture became the primary concern of the *vaisyas*, the most numerous of the four *varnas* which developed during the period. Cattle-rearing was a secondary occupation for them. Some craftsmen, too, may have belonged to this category. The period also saw the rise of the fourth *varna* of *sudras* from the conquered aborigines and the defeated and dispossessed sections of the Aryans. Although occasionally wealthy cattle-owners,<sup>79</sup> the *sudras* were by and large less well-off than the *vaisyas* and engaged in the service of the upper classes. References to the *sudra* being dedicated to toil (*tapase*) in the *purusamedha* (symbolic human sacrifice) in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*,<sup>80</sup> *Taittiriya Brahmana*,<sup>81</sup> and

*Satapatha Brahmana*<sup>82</sup> point to his belonging to the class of labourers. According to Kosambi, the new organization of society made available for the first time a supply of labour whose surplus was easily expropriated and the place of slave was taken by the sudra.<sup>83</sup> In Irfan Habib's opinion, the use of heavy ploughs without iron ploughshares implied as its inevitable corollary the employment of servile labourers.<sup>84</sup> The brahmana as a professional priest and the katriya/rajanya as warrior/ruler had also emerged as specific *varnas*, leading to the formation of the fourfold *varna* system during the period.

Reflecting the emerging social stratification as a result of progressive division of labour, specialization of functions and growth of surplus, the *varna* system was from the beginning hierarchical. With birth and heredity becoming increasingly important factors in this division of labour and specialization of functions, *jati* (literally caste) also developed during the period, the term first occurring in Yaska's *Nirukta*<sup>85</sup> and being applied to a woman of the sudra caste (*sudra-jatiya*). *Varna* was in essence exploitative in nature and content. There are crude statements to the effect that the vaisya and the sudra are to be exploited for the advantage of the ruling class with the brahmana priest's active cooperation and help. The *Aitareya Brahmana* characterizes a vaisya as *anyasya balikrit*, 'tributary to another', *anyasyadya*, 'to be eaten or lived upon by another', and *yathakamajyeya*, 'to be oppressed at will', and a sudra as *anyasya presya*, 'to be expelled at will', and *yathakamavadhya*, 'to be slain at will'.<sup>86</sup> Sacrifices are consciously designed to help rulers overcome internal conflicts and to make the vaisya and the sudra submissive.<sup>87</sup> Brahmana-ksatriya claims and counter-claims to supremacy notwithstanding, their distance from the vaisya and the sudra in the emerging class structure was growing. The former two joined hands to repress and exploit the vaisya and the sudra. In fact, brahmana-ksatriya collaboration is regarded as indispensable and vital for their mutual well-being and prosperity in several texts. The crucial role of the brahmanas, with more or less complete control over rituals and the Vedic lore, in theoretical formulations facilitating the process of tribal disintegration and class formation is transparent. Their invaluable support to buttress the temporal authority entitled them to gifts from the ruler, *visamatta* (eater of the *vis*) becomes one of whose epithets. Taxes collected in kind through kinsmen (*sajata*) of the monarch became now the primary source of extraction of the available surplus. *Varna* division thus approximated to class division.<sup>88</sup> Productivity in the pre-iron agriculture phase, however, not being high, the material basis of this class division was weak. The tribal bonds were, therefore, not completely sundered,<sup>89</sup> and the vaisyas not only formed part of the tribal militia, but also received an honourable place in rituals, a *Satapatha Brahmana* passage even ordaining that



the *ksatra* and the *vis* should eat from the same vessel.<sup>90</sup> A full-fledged class society and state with substantial appropriable surplus, regular taxation, army, administrative apparatus and monetary economy developed only when the use of iron in agriculture and crafts became common in the post-Vedic period.

### III

Few historians have written more comprehensively and adequately on the problem of social stratification in ancient India than my distinguished teacher, Professor R.S. Sharma. D.D. Kosambi's pioneering studies and brilliant insights touch the core of several themes handled by him in his books and numerous articles.<sup>91</sup> Romila Thapar is full of fresh ideas and her writings show a remarkable awareness of the latest trends and developments in disciplines like sociology and social anthropology. B.N.S. Yadava's masterly use of a wide range of original sources in his book *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*<sup>92</sup> and articles is worth emulation by every young researcher in Indian history. B.P. Mazumdar, Suvira Jaiswal, R.N. Nandi and a host of other historians including those from the south have enriched our understanding of caste and class in the ancient Indian context. Attempts to understand the patterns of social development in different regions of the country in the past and regional studies of the problem of social stratification are truly commendable, though there is need and scope for much more work in this area. Among the medieval Indian historians no one covered various branches of ancient Indian history in as much detail as the present Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, Professor Irfan Habib. The Anthropological Survey of India has under its 'People of India' project in course of 1985-90 compiled and computerized the latest data on 4,384 communities in all the States and Union Territories of India including 426 Scheduled Tribes, 443 Scheduled Castes (quite a few of these were neither in the past nor at present are regarded untouchables in different parts of the country) and 1,051 Backward Classes in 120 volumes which will prove invaluable to researchers in history. Dr K.S. Singh, the present Director-General of the Survey, and the scholars who have assisted him in this major academic endeavour deserve all compliments. Historians in this country need to look up more carefully the good work done by sociologists like M.N. Srinivas, Andre Beteille and G.S. Ghurye as well as their Western counterparts to have a few useful insights for their own researches in history. I have myself written a few lengthy articles on some untouchable groups and the despicable phenomenon of untouchability in the ancient period. I shall not attempt to cover the entire gamut of social stratification in post-Vedic times up to AD 1200 in this brief article and I shall draw your attention to only a few aspects of this problem in a general way.

One major development in the Later Vedic period was the beginning of the process of assimilation of forest-dwelling tribes on the periphery of the immigrant Aryan settlements. Quite a few such tribes are mentioned in the texts. Among these are the Nisadas,<sup>93</sup> the Candalas, the Paulkasas, the Andhras and the Kiratas. It is not that all these tribes and many others who are referred to in later texts came into equally close contact with the Aryans. But some of those who did and had poor material background fared badly in the unequal encounter. In fact they were among the first peoples who became tabooed and were subsequently damned as untouchables. It is a historical fact that when untouchability first appeared in the full-fledged class and caste society of the pre-Mauryan post-Vedic times, they were the first victims to be relegated to the ritually lowest social position. I have in mind the well-known—rather notorious—cases of the Candalas, Mritapas, Matangas and later Svapakas, Dombas and others. These were the original inhabitants of the country who are known to have belonged to the Munda-speaking Proto-Australoid ethnic type.<sup>94</sup> One theory about the origin of caste and untouchability is that these were pre-Aryan institutions<sup>95</sup> which the Aryans themselves imbibed from them. This is simply not true.

Similarly there is no basis to suggest that the caste system in our country first originated among the Dravidians in the south and then percolated to the north.<sup>96</sup> The south developed the phenomenon only as a result of the impact of north Indian cultural and political contact.<sup>97</sup> From what we know of the Harappans and the Aryans it is clear that they cannot be equated so far as their contribution to caste and untouchability in this country is concerned. There is no positive evidence for untouchability at Harappa and the Aryans did not bring the institution but developed it on Indian soil a few centuries after their advent.

Ideology and force were both systematically employed to slowly develop caste and untouchability in this country. The notion of pollution in relation to certain social groups was first elaborated in the *Dharmasutras* of Apastamba, Gautama, Baudhayana and Vasistha, then in the *Smritis* of Manu, Visnu, Yajnavalkya, Narada, Brihaspati and Katyayana, and still later in the early medieval *Dharmasastra* and *Nibandha* texts.<sup>98</sup> Even secular texts (by ancient Indian standards) like the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya fell in line. Detailed rules and norms were prescribed regarding marriage, food, association and contact and those who violated them—unless of course they were materially and politically strong—were in for serious trouble. One careful look at the institution of outcastes (*patita*)—they differed from the untouchables in not being permanent or hereditary—in *Dharmasastra* literature would show that they were to be no less severely punished for violation of prescribed norms and intimate contact with the untouchables than the untouchable segments till they relented and

observed the rituals of penitence and redemption. They were to lose inheritance; even their wife and children were expected to disown them; and of course for the society they would simply cease to matter.

The king's *danda* (coercive authority) was to be applied for the observance of caste rules<sup>99</sup> and several inscriptions bear out royal claims to follow the Dharmasastra directive in this regard. In their own way the epics and the Puranas lent support to caste norms, whose essence lay in its institutionalized inequality.<sup>100</sup> The brahmanas and the ksatriyas and all those who could by virtue of their power, resources and position join the elite group and had no role in primary productive activities benefited from the system; for its apparent rigidity notwithstanding, caste always retained the requisite amount of flexibility and an attitude of accommodation. Many foreign invading hordes were assimilated as higher caste groups. Even when indigenous tribes broke up, the best among them could be accommodated as priests or even as rulers.

The Dharmasastra writers employed new theoretical concepts to explain the social phenomenon. One such concept was the theory of *varnasamkara*,<sup>101</sup> which was used to explain the status of several emerging groups and the untouchability of sections like the Candalas, the latter being simply regarded as the lowest *pratiloma* caste—offspring of a hypogamous union between the fourth *varna* of sudra and a brahmana woman.

The notion of *jatyupakarsa* (upward mobility of a caste) owing to marriage in a higher *varna* or pursuit of an occupation prescribed for a higher *varna* continuously for five to seven generations<sup>102</sup> does not appear to have been valid with respect to the Candala. Downward mobility (*jatyapakarsa*) was, however, possible in the case of other theoretically *pratiloma* categories through marriage in a lower *varna* or pursuit of an occupation prescribed for a lower *varna* continuously for five to seven generations. As M.N. Srinivas points out, the untouchables differ from the other low castes in that, unlike the latter, the former have no means of pushing themselves up in the caste hierarchy and even Sanskritization does not help.

It is significant that the Sanskrit term *asprisya* for untouchability was first used in the *Visnusmriti*,<sup>103</sup> a text of the third century AD, and the phenomenon existed for long with terms like *anta*, *antya*, *antyaaja*, *antyaayoni*, *antyaavasayin*, *apapatra*, *abhisasta*, etc.

The classical *varna* theory did not have any place for a fifth *varna*, though in his commentary to the *Brahmasutra*, I. 4.12, Samkaracarya (early eighth century) shows awareness of a school of thinkers who regarded the Nisada as a fifth *varna* and the *Samba Purana*, 66. 10 (sixth-eighth centuries) mentions the fifth *varna*. Untouchability was evidently considered an integral part of the *varna* system.

It is not true that Buddhism tried to confront the caste system squarely or sought to destroy it.<sup>104</sup> Caste was denounced; brahmanical

superiority was challenged; divine sanction behind it was questioned; it was not permitted within the *Samgha* (Order of monks); but Buddha did not seek to weed it out from the society. Caste was part and parcel of the prevailing mode of production which benefited the haves at the cost of the have-nots and Lord Buddha was perceptive enough to broadly accept this social reality. Mahavira and Jainism, too, went along a similar line.

Beef-eating had nothing to do with the origin of untouchability.<sup>105</sup> It was not prohibited in the Dharmasastra texts until the early medieval period.

*Bhakti* succeeded in relaxing the rigours of caste to some extent.<sup>106</sup> Lokayata, Tantra and the Sahajiyas were openly hostile to caste and did not determinate against the low order but they failed to dislodge caste from its entrenched position in organized society.<sup>107</sup>

That the practice of untouchability was immediately connected with excessive and abnormal notions of purity and pollution cannot be denied, but then this is also true that caste did not develop in primitive societies where these notions are found. *Varna* in India provided a framework for their growth and systematization and projected through them the dominant material relations in ritual terms. The ideology of purity/pollution was surely used to assign low position, segregate and hereditarily exploit a large segment of population.

That there was periodically stiff resistance to caste oppression is reflected in the accounts of the Kali age in the epics and the Puranas, which show the discomfiture of the upper castes and an unusual aggressiveness on the part of the lower orders,<sup>108</sup> but the tempo does not appear to have been sustained and continuous enough to disrupt the system.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Despite numerous attempts and more than forty claims to success, the decipherment of the Indus script (the unilingual inscriptions, mostly on seals and some on amulet tablets or even as scratches on potsherds with never more than twenty and usually not more than ten symbols, are too short) remains an unresolved issue and does not shed light on the available archaeological material. In 'The Study of Society in Ancient India: A Reorientation of Perspectives', Presidential Address to the Ancient India section of the 31st session of the Indian History Congress, Romila Thapar argued that the decipherment must conform to a grammatical and linguistic system and the reading of the inscriptions must make sense in terms of the context of the culture; see *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (hereafter *PIHC*), Varanasi, 1969, p. 26. According to Asko Parpola, who with his Finnish colleague, Kimmo Koskeniemi, has on the basis of computer-aided analysis of the Indus script produced an impressive concordance of the known inscriptions, *A Concordance to the Texts in the Indus Script* (University of Helsinki, 1982), and with Simo Parpola, Seppo Koskeniemi and Pentti Aalto as co-authors written *The Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilization* (hereafter *Decipherment*; The Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 1969), the Indus script is

- full of challenging problems; see 'Interpreting the Indus Script', in B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilization*, Sir Mortimer Wheeler Commemoration Volume (hereafter *Frontiers*), Indian Archaeological Society and Books & Books, New Delhi, 1984, p. 191. Iravatham Mahadevan, author of the *Indus Script: Texts, Concordance and Tables* (Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1977), regards the Indus script as one of the seven pictographic scripts developed in the ancient Orient during the Bronze Age (c. 3000-1500 BC), the other six being Sumerian, Egyptian, Proto-Elamite, Cretan, Hittite and Chinese, generally written from the right, only about 7 per cent being written from the left, having 425±25 distinctive signs and being an independent invention; see 'What Do We Know About the Indus Script? *Neti Neti* ('Not This Nor That')', Presidential Address to the Historical Archaeology, Epigraphy and Numismatics section of the 49th session of the Indian History Congress, PIHC, Dharwad, 1988, pp. 600, 604-5, 614. On the basis of his structural and analytical study of the script, Mahadevan, like Parpola and his team and a group of Soviet philologists, ethnologists and mathematicians (G.V. Alekseev, M.A. Probst, A.M. Kondratov, I.K. Fedorova, B.Ya. Volcok and N.V. Gurov) led by Yu. V. Knorozov, who too have used the computer to bring out *The Soviet Decipherment of the Indus Valley Script: Translation and Critique* (hereafter *Soviet Decipherment*), edited by Arlene R.K. Zide and Kamil V. Zvelebil (Mouton, The Hague/Paris, 1976), maintains that the language was Proto-Dravidian and refutes S.R. Rao's theory put forward in his *The Decipherment of the Indus Script* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1982) that the language was an archaic branch of the Old Indo-Aryan and the script evolved in two stages, the early or mature script comprising 62 basic signs during 2500-1900 BC and the late script containing only 20 basic signs during 1900-1200 BC, the change-over being from a logographic-syllabic to a syllabic-alphabetic script; see Mahadevan's review article in Vivekanand Jha (ed.), *The Indian Historical Review* (hereafter *IHR*), Vol. VIII, Nos 1-2, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, July 1981 and January 1982, pp. 59-60, 64-66.
2. Culture, observes V. Gordon Childe in *Social Evolution* (Watts & Co., London, 1951, p. 26), is an organic whole, not a mechanical aggregate of traits. Of the two most important and best known sites of the Indus Valley (both in Pakistan now), Harappa in Punjab, though smaller in size than Mohenjo-daro in Sindh, being discovered in 1921, one year earlier than Mohenjo-daro, gave its name to this culture. There are still wide gaps in the archaeological material, notes A.H. Dani; see *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Pakistan*, Unesco, Paris, and the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1988, p. 1.
  3. In the post-Independence period Indian archaeologists have identified more than 700 sites of this culture inside the country and excavated to a varying degree as many as 40 of them; see B.K. Thapar, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India*, Unesco, Paris, and the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1985, p. 52.
  4. Sir John Marshall first estimated the duration of the Harappa Culture from 3250 to 2750 BC; see *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization* (hereafter *Mohenjo-daro*), Vol. I, Arthur Probsthain, London, 1931, pp. 104, 106. Sir Mortimer Wheeler dated this culture in 2500-1500 BC; see 'Harappa, 1946: The Defences and Cemetery-R 37', *Ancient India*, Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 3, New Delhi, January 1947, p. 82. In *The Indus Civilization* (3rd edn., Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 125; first published in 1953), however, Wheeler modified his position and postulated the founding of the nuclear cities some time before 2400 BC and their enduring in some shape in the eighteenth century BC, these time brackets not fitting closely and mechanically to the Indus towns and villages of all sizes and in all locations. Asko Parpola *et al* have dated the Harappa Culture in c. 2500-c. 1800 BC (*Decipherment*, p. 3), while Knorozov *et al* have dated its outer limits in c. 2200-c. 1750 BC (*Soviet Decipherment*, Preface, p. 5). D.P. Agrawal plotted some two dozen radiocarbon dates, including those for Kot Diji, Kalibangan and Lothal, and, based on uncalibrated dates, concluded c. 2300-1750 BC as the maximum date bracket of this culture, though at the individual sites the duration of this culture might have been still smaller ('Harappa Culture: New Evidence for A Shorter Chronology', *Science*, Vol. 143, No. 3609, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, 1964, pp. 950-51); cf. 'Harappan Chronology: A Re-examination of the Evidence',

- in D. Sen and A.K. Ghosh (eds.), *Studies in Prehistory*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, pp. 139, 147.
5. A. Ghosh (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology* (hereafter *Encyclopaedia*), Vol. I, ICHR and Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1989 (a posthumously published two-volume monumental work which contains the major findings of Indian archaeology in prehistory, protohistory and ancient historical period during the last one 150 years and encompasses information available up to 1978), p. 75.
  6. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (hereafter *Wonder*), 3rd revised edn., Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1967; first published in 1954, p. 15; Glyn Daniel's Preface to Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, Watts & Co., London, 1965; first published in 1936, p. xii.
  7. A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (hereafter *City*), Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1973, p. 2.
  8. Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (hereafter *New Light*), reprint, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963, first published under this title in 1934 and as *The Most Ancient East* in 1928, p. 175; *Man Makes Himself*, p. 169; *What Happened in History* (hereafter *What Happened*), reprint, Penguin, 1972, first published in 1942, p. 132; Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1950, p. 140; A.D. Pusalker, 'The Indus Valley Civilization', in R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951, pp. 176, 196; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 136; Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Birth of Indian Civilization: India and Pakistan Before 500 B.C* (hereafter *Birth*), Penguin, 1968, p. 126; Raymond Allchin, 'The Legacy of the Indus Civilization', in Gregory L. Possehl (ed.), *Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective* (hereafter *Harappan Civilization*), American Institute of Indian Studies and Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1982, p. 332; K. Antonova, G. Bongard-Levin and G. Kotovsky, *A History of India*, Book I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 14-16; V.K. Thakur, *Urbanization in Ancient India*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 26-27; Dani, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Pakistan*, pp. 2, 55.
  9. A. Ghosh places the Early and Mature Harappa periods within c. 2700-1900 BC and the Late Harappa period within c. 1700-1000 BC; see *Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, pp. 87, 90. The most recent radiocarbon dates (without MASCA correction) are c. 2900-2100 BC for the Early Harappa period, c. 2200-1800 BC for the Mature Harappa period and c. 1800-1300 BC for the Late Harappa period. Applying MASCA correction, the Early and Mature Harappa periods extend from c. 3200 to 2200 BC and from c. 2700 to 2100 BC respectively; see K.S. Ramchandran, 'Dating the Indus Civilization' in B.B. Lal and S. P. Gupta (ed.), *Frontiers*, p. 539.
  10. Gregory L. Possehl (ed.), *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (hereafter *Ancient Cities*), Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, pp. x, 47-48, 287. Though the Early and Late periods were substantially rural, according to Jim G. Shaffer, urban centres were not absent during the Late Harappa period; see 'Harappan Culture: A Reconsideration', in Possehl (ed.), *Harappan Civilization*, p. 49.
  11. The new cities are spatially larger and can accommodate a much denser population than the agricultural villages that have been absorbed in them or that still subsist beside them and urbanism on a vaster scale than on the Nile or the Euphrates signified progress in terms of organic and cultural evolution; see Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, pp. 14-15, 142. The Indus Civilization marked the zenith of the first period of urbanization during the Bronze Age, maintains Dani; see *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Pakistan*, p. 1.
  12. Vivekanand Jha, 'Agricultural Labour and Village Artisans in Early North Indian History (up to c. 500 BC)' (hereafter 'Agricultural Labour and Village Artisans'), *Social Science Probings*, Vol. I, No. 4, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 544-46 (the article was first presented at the Indian History Congress symposium at its 45th session held at Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, in 1984); cf. Childe, *What Happened*, p. 135; *Progress and Archaeology*, Watts & Co., London, 1944, p. 49; *Man Makes Himself*, p. 131; Ernest Mackay, *Early Indus Civilization*, 2nd enlarged and revised edn., Luzac, London, 1948, first published in 1935, pp. 132-33; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 153, 155; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 72, 84; Basham, *Wonder*, p. 18; D.D. Kosambi, *An*

*Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (hereafter *Introduction*), Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1956, pp. 55, 62; *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (hereafter *Culture*), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p. 54; Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *Birth*, p. 126; R.S. Sharma, 'Stages in Ancient Indian Economy I: Bronze Age Urbanism to Iron-based Agriculture' (Section on 'Urban Experiment, c. 2600–1500 BC'), *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* (hereafter *Perspectives*), Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 105–6; *Ancient India*, 3rd revised edn., NCERT, New Delhi, 1990, p. 48, first published in 1977; Irfan Habib, 'The Peasant in Indian History', General President's Address to the 43rd Indian History Congress session, PIHC, Kurukshetra, 1982, p. 6.

Some scholars have envisioned the existence of a peasant segment in the towns also; cf. Childe, *Progress and Archaeology*, p. 49; idem, 'The Urban Revolution', reprinted in Possehl (ed.), *Ancient Cities*, p. 15; Robert McAdams, 'The Natural History of Urbanism', loc. cit., p. 20.

13. Shereen Ratnagar, *Encounters: The Westerly Trade of the Harappa Civilization*, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 232; Childe, *New Light*, p. 186; *Man Makes Himself*, p. 150; *What Happened*, p. 134; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 133–40; Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 81–82; Kosambi, *Introduction*, pp. 55–57; *Culture*, pp. 59–60; R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives*, p. 107; *Ancient India*, pp. 49–50; Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan* (hereafter *Rise*), pp. 219–20; A. Ghosh (ed.), *Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, p. 85.
14. Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *The External Trade of the Indus Civilization*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 166, 169; Basham, *Wonder*, pp. 18–19; R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives*, p. 107; *Ancient India*, p. 49; A. Ghosh (ed.), *Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, p. 85.
15. Kosambi, *Introduction*, pp. 57–58; Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *Birth*, p. 129 fn.; S.P. Gupta, 'Internal Trade of the Harappans', in B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (ed.), *Frontiers*, pp. 417, 424.
16. Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *Rise*, pp. 193–95, 197, 199, 201–2; A. Ghosh (ed.), *Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, pp. 83–84.
17. Vivekanand Jha, 'Agricultural Labour and Village Artisans', op. cit., p. 547.
18. Among the scholars who attest the existence of slaves are Mackay, *Early Indus Civilization*, p. 39; Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 169–70; D.H. Gordon, *The Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture*, Bhulabhai Memorial Institute and N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd, Bombay, 1958, pp. 71, 74; Basham, *Wonder*, p. 18; Kosambi, *Introduction*, pp. 55, 62, and *Culture*, p. 54; Dev Raj Chanaana, *Slavery in Ancient India as Depicted in Pali and Sanskrit Texts*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1960, p. 170; and Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky, *A History of India*, Book I, pp. 20, 23. Unlike the Soviet scholar V.V. Struve and the German scholar Walter Ruben, however, who regarded the Harappa Culture as a specimen of a slave-based social formation, R.S. Sharma expresses doubts regarding slave labour being a significant component of the Harappan economy; see *Perspectives*, pp. 108–9; cf. Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky, *A History of India*, Book I, p. 23; Vivekanand Jha, 'Ancient Indian Political History: Possibilities and Pitfalls', *Social Scientist*, Vol. XVIII, Nos 1–2 (200–201), New Delhi, January–February 1990, p. 41 (in a slightly modified form the article has appeared in *IHR*, Vol. XIV, Nos 1–2, July 1987 and January 1988, published in December 1990, see pp. 101–2, and an earlier version was first presented at the 50th Indian History Congress session at Gorakhpur University in 1989).

Even those scholars who do not consider the evidence regarding slavery in the Harappa Culture as irrefutable, for example, G.K. Rai (*Involuntary Labour in Ancient India*, Chaitanya Publishing House, Allahabad, 1981, p. 46) and Uma Chakravarti ('Of Dasas and Karmakaras: Servile Labour in Ancient India', in Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney (eds.), *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, Sangam Books, Madras, and Orient Longman, 1985, pp. 42–43), acknowledge the existence of 'a sort of organised labour, with a measure of compulsion never far away' or 'regimented dependent labour' (see Rai, op. cit., pp. 46–47), or 'a section which laboured' in this stratified society and resided in barrack-like quarters near the granaries (see Uma Chakravarti, loc. cit.). Wheeler, too, had referred much earlier to servile and semi-servile labour as a

- familiar element of all ancient polities including the Harappan (*The Indus Civilization*, p. 54).
19. Y.M. Chitalwala, 'The Problem of Class Structure in the Indus Civilization', in B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers*, p. 211. In his opinion, the so-called massacre at Mohenjo-daro may have been the result of an internal conflict rather than an all-out external invasion (*ibid.*, p. 215). Possehl, too, finds society internally differentiated and structurally specialized ('Archaeological Terminology and the Harappan Civilization', *ibid.*, p. 30), and envisages peasant revolts as one of the possible factors of the decline of the Harappa Culture (*Ancient Cities*, p. 288). Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky do not accept the view that the Harappan society was pre-class in character and find unmistakable evidence of class stratification here (*A History of India*, Book I, p. 22). Amita Ray, too, has no doubt about the hierarchical structure of the Harappan urban society based upon the rule of the few over many ('Harappan Art and Life: Sketch of A Social Analysis', hereafter 'Harappan Art', in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Niharranjan Ray*, hereafter *History and Society*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta, 1978, pp. 117, 119, 129). Class societies, according to Childe, subsume a small minority that annexes, concentrates and accumulates the social surplus and the masses who at best retain just as much of the product of their labour as is required for domestic consumption (*Social Evolution*, p. 37).
  20. Childe, *New Light*, p. 174; *Man Makes Himself*, pp. 130, 142; *Progress and Archaeology*, p. 22.
  21. Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp. 136, 153.
  22. Basham, *Wonder*, pp. 15-16.
  23. Kosambi, *Introduction*, pp. 58-59, 61-62; *Culture*, pp. 64, 70.
  24. Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *Birth*, p. 137; *Rise*, p. 182.
  25. Puskas, 'Society and Religion in the Indus Valley Civilisation', in Bridget Allchin (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 163.
  26. Irfan Habib, General President's Address, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
  27. R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives*, p. 106; *Ancient India*, p. 50.
  28. Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky, *A History of India*, Book I, p. 53. Pusalker, too, regards it a 'democratic bourgeois' polity; see 'The Indus Valley Civilization', in Majumdar (ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p. 173.
  29. Puskas, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
  30. R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives*, p. 106.
  31. Childe, *New Light*, p. 175; *What Happened*, p. 135.
  32. Childe, *What Happened*, p. 134.
  33. J.M. Kenoyer, 'Specialized Producers and Urban Elites: On the Role of Craft Industries in Mature Harappan Urban Contexts', in Kenoyer (ed.), *Old Problems and New Perspectives in the Archaeology of South Asia* (hereafter *New Perspectives*), University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1989, p. 180.
  34. Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky, *A History of India*, Book I, pp. 21, 23.
  35. The rich-poor divide amounting to class division is indicated not only by the well-to-do sections inhabiting large houses and the poor taking shelter in tiny dwellings, but also by the burial practices showing the wealthy as being interred with jewellery and decorated vessels and the poor with accoutrements on a far more modest scale (*ibid.*, p. 23). According to Amita Ray, the more conventional and sophisticated potteries, the intaglio seals, the bearded busts and the dancing Harappan male seem to reflect the ethos and psyche of the dominant minority, while the terracotta female figurines and animals, the vegetal decorations and narrative paintings, the Mohenjo-daro girl and the male torso reflect the ethos and psyche of the working communities ('Harappan Art', *op. cit.*, p. 129).
  36. Iravati Karve, *Hindu Society—An Interpretation*, first published in 1961, 2nd edn., Deshmukh Prakashan, Poona, 1968, pp. 54-64, and Introduction by W. Norman Brown, p. vi.
  37. Iravati Karve, *Kinship Organization in India*, first published in 1953, 3rd edn., Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p. 7.



38. S.C. Malik, *Indian Civilization: The Formative Period—A Study of Archaeology as Anthropology*, first published in 1968, reprint, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987, p. 107.
39. S.C. Malik, *Understanding Indian Civilization: A Framework of Enquiry*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1975, p. 76.
40. S.C. Malik, 'Harappan Social and Political Life', in B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (eds.), *Frontiers*, pp. 204, 208. In a recent article, 'An Enquiry into the Concepts of Technology, Surplus and Social Stratification' (in Dilip K. Chakrabarti (ed.), *Man and Environment*, Vol. XII, Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies, Deccan College, Pune, 1988, pp. 1-16), Makkhan Lal, too, has made an elaborate, clumsy and facile attempt to deny any link of the appearance of surplus and advance in technology with the emergence of social stratification in the ancient period. His broadside on Childe in the names of all the supposed celebrities on the other side of the fence that Makkhan Lal could think of is especially misplaced because Childe also maintained that 'man's progress from savagery to civilization is intimately bound up with the advance of abstract thinking' (*The Aryans: A Study of Indo-European Origins*, hereafter *Aryans*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1926, p. 3), and thirty-seven years before Kosambi published his famous article, 'Combined Methods in Indology' (*Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. VI, Nos 3-4, Mouton, The Hague, 1963, pp. 177-202), Childe advocated a coordination of literary evidence with archaeological and anthropological data (Preface, p. xii) for the reconstruction of history.
41. A. Ghosh, *City*, p. 84.
42. Suvira Jaiswal, 'Caste in the Socio-Economic Framework of Early India', Presidential Address to the Ancient India section of the 38th Indian History Congress session, PIHC, Bhubaneswar, 1977, pp. 27-28; idem, 'Studies in the Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', *IHR*, Vol. VI, Nos 1-2, July 1979 and January 1980, pp. 11-12.
43. Cf. Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, p. 170.
44. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986.
45. Preface, p. ix.
46. Pp. 1-27.
47. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1971.
48. P. xv.
49. Romila Thapar, Presidential Address, op. cit., pp. 21, 36 fn.; idem, *The Past and Prejudice*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1975, p. 29. In his Foreword to Stephen Fuchs, *The Children of Hari: A Study of the Nimar Balahis in Madhya Pradesh, India* (Verlag Herold, Vienna, and The New Order Book Co., Ahmedabad, 1949, p. viii), Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf no doubt tentatively puts forward the hypothesis of an urban origin of untouchability, but does not consider it possible to ascribe the growth of this social phenomenon to any definite period in Indian history. Even so, the hypothesis is not well-founded in evidence, for not only has the movement from villages to towns in recent times been a factor in lessening the rigours of caste and untouchability, the 'second urbanization' in the Ganga basin in the sixth century BC borrowed nothing from the Harappa Culture (A. Ghosh, *City*, pp. 2, 30), and untouchability first appears prominently in post-Vedic texts broadly reflecting a rural setting. The study of the socially and culturally lowest segment of the Nimar Balahis by Fuchs himself does not even remotely indicate that their untouchability was at any stage due to their habitat in an urban milieu.
50. Romila Thapar, Presidential Address, loc. cit.; cf. J.M. Kenoyer, 'Socio-Economic Structure of the Indus Civilization as Reflected in Specialized Crafts and the Question of Ritual Segregation', in Kenoyer (ed.), *New Perspectives*, p. 189. In her recent study, *From Lineage to State: Social Formations in the First Millennium BC in the Ganga Valley* (hereafter *Lineage*) (Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 53), without specifically mentioning caste, she refers to the possibility of Harappan society being ruled by an aristocracy claiming power through ritual and religion and the notion of purity and pollution prevailing there.  
In her *A History of India* (Vol. I, first published in 196, reprint, Penguin, 1986, p. 37), however, Romila Thapar does not recognise caste as a phenomenon of the

Harappa Culture and categorically states that there was no consciousness of caste even when the Rigvedic Aryans first came to India. In her *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (hereafter *Interpretations*) (Orient Longman, 1978) also, where the Presidential Address has been reprinted in pages 211–39, she maintains in the chapter 'Society and Law in the Hindu and Buddhist Traditions' (pp. 26–39) that the order of castes emerged from a divine source in the Hindu tradition (p. 29) and in the chapter 'Ethics, Religion and Social Protest in the First Millennium BC in Northern India' (pp. 40–62) she assigns the growth of caste to this period (p. 47). Although in her General President's Address to the 44th Indian History Congress session she speaks of continuities between the Harappan and post-Harappan societies, including the Vedic (PIHC, Burdwan, 1983, pp. 4, 18)—she had expressed her inability to identify any 'specifically Aryan elements in the variety of post-Harappan cultures in the Indus and Ganga valleys in her Varanasi Presidential Address in 1969, PIHC, pp. 16–17—she refrains from mentioning caste in the Harappan context.

51. Vivekanand Jha, 'Candala and the Origin of Untouchability' (hereafter Candala), *IHR*, Vol. XIII, Nos 1–2, July 1986 and January 1987, pp. 33–34 fn. A shorter version of the article was first presented at the International Seminar on 'New History' organised by the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, in collaboration with the India International Centre, New Delhi, in February 1988; and a more elaborate version was presented at the National Seminar on 'Untouchability in Ancient India' organised by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, in March 1989.

The Rigvedic Aryans are no longer regarded as the immediate successors of the Mature Harappa Culture or the invading hordes which destroyed it, as had been initially suggested by Childe (*New Light*, pp. 187–88) and Wheeler ('Harappa, 1946: The Defences and Cemetery R 37', *Ancient India*, No. 3, January 1947, p. 82) and enthusiastically supported later, among others, by Kosambi (*Introduction*, pp. 68–69; *Culture*, pp. 55, 71). Way back in 1931 Sir John Marshall thought that the Harappa Culture could have been but 'a mere shadow of its former self' when the Indo-Aryans entered Punjab about the middle of the second millennium BC, and since no evidence of a large-scale armed confrontation had been found at the excavated sites, they were not its destroyers (*Mohenjo-daro*, Vol. I, pp. 110–12). Among the adherents to this view are Basham (*Wonder*, pp. 24, 28); Asko Parpola *et al* (*Decipherment*, p. 5); K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (*Aryans and Dravidians*, P.C. Manaktala & Sons, Bombay, 1979, pp. 8–9); George F. Dales ('The Mythical Massacre at Mohenjo-daro', in Possehl (ed.), *Ancient Cities*, p. 294); Vishnu-Mittre ('The Harappan Civilization and the Need of A New Approach', in Possehl (ed.), *Harappan Civilization*, p. 37); Romila Thapar (*Interpretations*, pp. 18, 152–53, 262); Antonova, Bongard-Levin and Kotovsky (*A History of India*, Book I, pp. 27–29); R.S. Sharma (*Perspectives*, p. 110); and A. Ghosh (ed., *Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, p. 89). As Dani points out, the *Rigveda* does not speak of a great state against which the Aryans fought and their opponents may have been those who lived in small territorial zones like that of Taxila; see *The Historic City of Taxila*, Unesco, Paris; and the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1986, p. 35.

52. Emile Benveniste, a well-known authority in comparative linguistics, has found words corresponding to Sanskrit *lotra* in several Indo-European languages; see *Indo-European Language and Society*, Faber & Faber, London, 1973, pp. 135–36.
53. R.S. Sharma has counted 176 references to *gau* (cattle) as against 21 references to agricultural activities in the *Rigveda*. Cattle not only provided milk, meat and hide, but as the primary source of energy were also used in ploughing fields and drawing carts. Battles were fought for the sake of cattle, which also formed the medium of exchange and were the very measure of wealth of the Rigvedic Aryans; see 'Forms of Property in the Early Portions of the *Rigveda*', *Essays in Honour of Professor S.C. Sarkar*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p. 40; cf. *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (hereafter *Material Culture*), Munshiram Manoharlal, New-Delhi, 1987, pp. 38–39; *Sudras in Ancient India* (hereafter *Sudras*), first published in 1958, 3rd edn., Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1990, pp. 10, 12, 21, 29; Kosambi, *Introduction*, p. 77.

54. No other grain is specified.
55. The traditional idea of *vis* being a subdivision of *jana* has been disputed by R.N. Nandi, in whose opinion *jana* signified the earlier wandering group while *vis* marked the beginning of household life; see 'Anthropology and the Study of the Veda', Review Article on Romila Thapar's *Lineage*, *IHR*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1-2, pp. 155-56. Romila Thapar's hypotheses regarding *vis* and lineage presented in her book on *Lineage* have been disputed by A.M. Shah, R.N. Nandi and R.S. Sharma.
56. R.S. Sharma, 'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation in Rigvedic Society' *IHR*, Vol. IV, No. 1, July 1977, pp. 3, 4, 11; *Perspectives*, pp. 28, 113.
57. *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (hereafter *Vedic Index*), Vol. I, first published in 1912, reprint, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1967, p. 357.
58. Basham, *Wonder*, p. 32.
59. VIII. 56.3; Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (hereafter *Dharmasastra*), Vol. II, Pt. 1, first published in 1941, 2nd edn., Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, pp. 180-81.
60. Chanana, *Slavery*, pp. 19-20.
61. Kosambi, *Introduction*, pp. 92-93.
62. Romila Thapar, *Lineage*, pp. 39-40.
63. Irfan Habib, General President's Address, op. cit., p. 7.
64. R.N. Nandi, 'Anthropology and the *Rigveda*', op. cit., pp. 162-64.
65. In Nandi's opinion horse-yoked chariots were also used for gathering fruits, honeycomb, *soma* plant and game; *ibid.*, p. 164.
66. *Rigveda*, IX. 112.3.
67. Jaimal Rai, *The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Change in Ancient India* (300 BC-300 AD), Bharatiya Vidya Prakshan, Varanasi, 1974, pp. 99-100.
68. R.S. Sharma, *Sudras*, p. 30; *Perspectives*, pp. 27-28; 'Conflict, Distribution and Differentiation in Rigvedic Society', op. cit., p. 11.
69. R.S. Sharma refers to the difference of colour and physiognomy as well as cultural differences between the Aryans and their enemies; see *Sudras*, pp. 14-16. Basham stresses the religious, social and cultural differences between the Aryans and the non-Aryans, but concedes that the racial connotation of *arya* had not become quite meaningless in the Rigvedic stage; see 'Aryan and Non-Aryan in India', in M.M. Deshpande and P.E. Hook (eds.), *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, University of Michigan, 1979, pp. 4-5.
70. *Rigveda*, X. 90. 12.
71. The view expressed in *Vedic Index* (Vol. II, p. 250), by Macdonell and Keith that the caste system was already well on its way towards general acceptance in the *Rigveda* is not correct. Childe rightly denies the existence of caste in this text (*Aryans*, p. 32). Irfan Habib correctly points out that it is futile to expect the social institution like caste to exist before the producers in society were able to provide a 'surplus' and the *varna* initially presaged very little of the caste system that was to grow later; see *Caste and Money in Indian History*, D.D. Kosambi Memorial Lecture, 1985, University of Bombay, 1987, pp. 4-5.
72. Vivekanand Jha, 'Stages in the History of Untouchables' (hereafter 'Stages'), *IHR*, Vol. II, No. 1, July 1975, p. 14; 'Candala', *IHR*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1-2, p. 1.
73. R.S. Sharma, 'The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware Culture', in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (ed.), *History and Society*, pp. 131-43.
74. R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture*, p. 60.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 58; 'Class Formation and Its Material Basis in the Upper Gangetic Basin (c. 1000-500 BC)' (hereafter 'Class Formation'), *IHR*, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 2; B.P. Mazumdar, 'Changing Profile of Economic History', Presidential Address, Ancient India section, 37th Indian History Congress session, *PIHC*, Calicut, 1976, p. 38.
76. R.S. Sharma, 'Class Formation', op. cit., pp. 2-3; 'Problems of Social Formations in Early India', General President's Address, 36th Indian History Congress session, *PIHC*, Aligarh, 1975, p. 5.
77. R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture*, p. 59.
78. R.S. Sharma, 'Class Formation', op. cit., p. 7.
79. *Bahu-pasu*, *Pancavimsa Brahmana*, VI. 1. II.
80. *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, XXX. 5.
81. *Taittiriya Brahmana*, III. 4. 1. 1.
82. *Satapatha Brahmana*, XIII. 6. 2. 10.

83. Kosambi, *Introduction*, p. 91; *Culture*, p. 24.
84. Irfan Habib, General President's Address, op. cit., p. 10.
85. XII. 13. The *Nirukta* is a commentary on the *Nighantu*, a Vedic glossary in five chapters and is pre-Paninean.
86. *Aitareya Brahmana*, VII. 29.
87. *Satapatha Brahmana*, VI. 4. 1. 13.
88. Claude Meillassoux, 'Are There Castes in India?', *Economy and Society*, Vol. II, No. 1, London, February 1975, pp. 89-111.
89. Basham, *Wonder*, p. 41.
90. *Satapatha Brahmana*, IV. 3.3. 15.
91. It is unfortunate that a compilation of all his articles except those on coins (*Indian Numismatics*, (ed.) B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1981) is yet to be published.
92. Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1973.
93. See my article, 'From Tribe to Untouchable: The Case of Nisadas', in R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha (eds.), *Indian Society: Historical Probing (In Memory of D.D. Kosambi)*, ICHR and People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 67-84.
94. A.L. Basham, 'Aryan and Non-Aryan', in Deshpande and Hook (eds.), *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p. 2.
95. Cf. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, *Social Life in Ancient India*, Academic Publishers, Calcutta, 1965, p. 151.
96. This hypothesis was put forward by N.K. Dutt, *Origin of Caste in India*, Vol. I, c. 2000-300 BC, London, 1931, pp. 106-7.
97. K.A.N. Sastri, *Aryans and Dravidians*, pp. 48-82. In his book entitled *Untouchability: A Historical Study* (Koodal Publishers, Madurai, 1979, pp. 127, 132-41, 144), K.R. Hanumanthan has shown that untouchability in the south has a distinctly later origin than in the north and the earliest references to untouchability can be found in *Acarakkovai* (fourth/fifth century AD) which shows the Dharmasastra influence.
98. The obligatory nature of expiatory rites and penances, relatively simple or complex, and the strong social sanction behind them is proved by elaborate provisions regarding their strict enforcement in these texts.
99. The preservation of the *varna* order is ordained as the primary responsibility of the monarch in the *Dharmasutras* of Gautama (XI. 9-10) and Vasistha (XIX. 7-8), the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya (1. 3. 14-17), the *Smritis* of Manu (VII. 35), Visnu (III. 1, 33), Narada (XII. 113) and Yajnavalkya (I. 363).
100. The *Ramayana*, for example, portrays Rama killing a sudra named Sambuka who in violation of *Dharmasastra* norms was practising penance which had purportedly resulted in the death of a brahmana's son (*Uttara Kanda*, LXXIII. 2-LXXVI. 15, Gita Press Edition).
101. See my article 'Varnasamkara in the Dharmasutras: Theory and Practice', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. XIII, Pt. 3, Leiden, 1970, pp. 280, 287-88; G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol. II, *Dimensions of Ancient Indian Social History*, Delhi, 1984, p. 229; S.J. Tambia, 'From Varna to Caste Through Mixed Unions' in Jack Goody (ed.), *Character of Kinship*, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 218, 223-24. The substantial increase in the number of mixed castes in Manu (55 according to P.V. Kane, *Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, Pt. I, p. 59) reflects the growing fusion and assimilation of various elements with the Aryan population. *Varnasamkara* was presumed to be caused not only by marriage with women unfit for marriage or promiscuity among the *varnas*, but also by relinquishing one's obligatory duties (*Manusmriti*, X. 24).
102. *Gautama Dharmasutra*, IV. 22-24; *Manusmriti*, I. 96.
103. *Visnumsmriti*, X. 37-38. Katyayana (AD 400-600) also uses the term *asprisyas* twice in the sense of untouchables (verses, 433, 783).
104. A useful recent study based on the Buddhist Canon is that by Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987. It is significant that like the *Upanisads*, *Dharmasastra* and other brahmanical texts, Buddha also expressed full faith in the theory of high and low births and material position being connected with action in previous birth. B.R. Ambedkar did not carefully go into all the evidence while propounding the theory that Buddhism in a way effectively countered caste and untouchability in

- the country. For a detailed exposition of my views in this regard, see my articles 'Stages', *IHR*, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 21-23, and 'Candala', *IHR*, Vol. XIII, Nos 1-2, pp. 24-31.
105. B.R. Ambedkar made untenable claims in this regard in his book *The Untouchables* (Delhi, 1948, pp. 103, 155, 159); cf. Vivekanand Jha, 'Stages', op. cit., p. 31.
  106. See my article 'Social Content of the *Bhagavadgita*', *IHR*, Vol. XI, Nos. 1-2, July 1984 and January 1985, pp. 1-44 (first presented at the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference held at the Kern Institute, Leiden, in August 1987). This *IHR* volume was released in 1988. I have not found any evidence of the impact of feudalism on *bhakti* (devotion) in this text.
  107. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya has in his book *Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1959), and B.N.S. Yadava has in his study *Society in Northern India* provided evidence for this.
  108. R.S. Sharma, 'The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis' in S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), *History and Thought (Essays in Honour of A.L. Basham)*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 186-203; B.N.S. Yadava, 'The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages', *IHR*, Vol. V, Nos. 1-2, July 1978 and January 1979, pp. 31-63; Vivekanand Jha, 'Candala', op. cit., pp. 21-23.

SUVIRA JAISWAL\*

## *Varna Ideology and Social Change\*\**

The traditional view of the *varnas* is that they are of divine origin, fixed and universal. The *varna* stratification pervades the entire universe<sup>1</sup> and is related to the three basic qualities of nature, *satya* (goodness or purity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (darkness or ignorance). These qualities are inherent and inborn in every object or being. Hence, in its conception *varna* stratification is both functional and hierarchical. Occupations have to be hereditary as function and aptitude are determined by birth and these stand in a hierarchical relation sanctified by religion. Any transgression is sinful as it means a reversal of the natural order, which is to be maintained by distancing the *varnas* from each other through the practice of endogamy. Thus as far as the ideology of *varna* is concerned, social change affecting the functions or position of a *varna* is an aberration, a straying away from the normal, causing the confusion of the *varnas*.

The question arises as to what was the process leading to the formation of this ideology, what was its relationship to empirical reality and how was it related to social change. It also involves the problem of the internalization of this ideology by those who stood at the lower rungs of the *varna* ladder.

As to the beginnings of this ideology, theories which trace it to the peculiar genius of the Indo-Europeans or of pre-historic or proto-historic non-Aryans are highly speculative, based on a subjective and not rarely mistaken interpretation of data.<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to examine such theories in detail but mention may be made of two, namely, the views of Georges Dumézil and those of D.D. Kosambi as both have made a deep impression on Indologists and historians.

Dumézil argued<sup>3</sup> that the tripartite social order of priests, warriors and commoners was characteristic of the Indo-Europeans, who had a predilection towards a three-fold categorization. This typified their

\* Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

\*\* Paper presented at the symposium on 'Ideology and Social Change' at the 51st session of the Indian History Congress, 29 December 1990.

world-view and the Indo-European pantheon was a projection of the tripartite class system, which later hardened as *varna* in India and *pistra* in Iran. A critique of this theory was provided by John Brough<sup>4</sup> who showed that a similar threefold ordering of the social order into priests, warriors and cattle-herders may be seen in Semitic societies portrayed in the Old Testament. More recently, Bruce Lincoln<sup>5</sup> has shown that the Nilotic tribes of East Africa too have a similar three-fold division with priests enjoying a hierarchical superiority over the warriors. His basic argument that the roots of the separation of the priest and warrior elements lie in the ecology of cattle-keepers is quite plausible, although it is evident that this separation is only functional at this stage and is not lineage-based or genealogically determined. Even Emile Benveniste,<sup>6</sup> who agrees with Dumézil in tracing the tripartite social division to Indo-Europeans clearly states that these were functional divisions not 'political' or 'genealogical'; these were not kin-based. In his view the Indo-European social units were family, clan, tribe and country in the manner of concentric circles, but there was no uniformity in this regard; each group of Indo-Europeans developed these institutions independently. Nevertheless, Benveniste like Dumézil traces the dichotomy of priest and warrior and the notion of hierarchy of social orders to the Indo-European phase.

But the idea that those who deal with the divine are superior to those who have temporal tasks is nothing unusual or typical of any one culture. *Varna* ideology is much more than a recognition of three social categories to which a fourth one, that of the sudras, was added due to the historical circumstance of the Aryans confronting and subjugating the non-Aryans in vedic and post-vedic times. The basic question is: what led to the origin of an endogamous caste structure which derived its legitimacy from the vedic notion of a hierarchical grouping of occupational groups, when there is no trace of endogamous lineage-clusters among the Indo-Europeans or in the *Rigveda*. This is the question which puzzled D.D. Kosambi. He pointed out<sup>7</sup> that the Yajurvedic four *varnas* were quite different from the four classes mentioned in the ancient Iranian sources, namely, the priest, the charioteer, the tiller and the artisan. Endogamy is nowhere mentioned in the *Yasna* and in ancient Iran all the four classes were equally honoured, but this was not the case with the ancient Indian *varna* or caste organization, which had both endogamy as well as hierarchy. According to Kosambi an internal fourfold caste system among the Aryan tribes in India developed due to the assimilation of the survivors of the Harappa culture with the conquering Aryans. The subjugation of the Harappan agrarian population, identified as the Dasas of the *Rigveda* by Kosambi, formed the nucleus of the Dasa/sudra *varna*, but the adoption of the 'ritually superior' priesthood of the Harappa culture by the Aryan tribes proved

catalytic in his opinion, for it separated the priesthood from the kshatriya elite and led to the formation of an endogamous *varna*-caste system, 'for otherwise', he remarks, 'there is no reason for demarcation into endogamous castes.'<sup>8</sup>

It is curious that a perceptive scholar like D.D. Kosambi failed to note that his hypothesis regarding the origin of the brahmana caste hardly explains endogamy. In his detailed study of the brahmanical gotras he argues that of the seven sages regarded as the primary founders of the brahmanical gotras only Visvamitra was 'the one real indubitable Aryan', the rest were non-Aryans. In his view the story of the miraculous birth of Vasistha from a jar and his description as the 'first brahmana' are unmistakable proofs of his non-Aryan origin. Even if we grant this,<sup>9</sup> we find that the Visvamitras occupy a considerable space in the gotra lists, hence the Aryan priestly group was not numerically insignificant. However, what is more important is the fact that endogamy does not demarcate the Visvamitras from the Vasisthas, rather the two combine to form one endogamous *varna*-caste which is separated from the kshatriya, vaishya and shudra *varnas*. Thus ethnic isolation does not explain the emergence of an endogamous brahmana caste in the first instance. Of course, endogamy does facilitate the absorption of tribal groups of diverse ethnic origins in a *varna*/caste system, which allows their incorporation without the loss of their separate identity, a point which has become commonplace in many sociological studies; but as the example of the brahmana caste formation shows, endogamous *varna* categories emerged when the process of social and ethnic fusion was going on at all levels. Kosambi himself has suggested that a few of the Dasa chiefs eulogized in the Rigvedic hymns may have been survivors of the Harappa culture who were adopted into the Aryan tribes; and there is nothing to show that such absorptions had led to the formation of separate endogamous castes within the folds of the kshatriya or brahmana *varna* in the vedic period. In our opinion endogamy was practised not to demarcate the Aryan and the non-Aryan but to differentiate occupational categories of varying status and thus had a socio-economic basis. To explain the endogamy of the caste society in terms of racial or ethnic exclusiveness is quite fallacious. Endogamy is both a manifestation and a tool for perpetuating class and gender exploitation;<sup>10</sup> and once it came to characterize the *varna* system, it provided the system both strength and flexibility. For, the system could go on expanding an hierarchical society by providing space to alien groups and drawing them in its vortex without doing itself or the notion of hierarchy any serious damage. Thus caste endogamy co-existed with hypergamy which allowed limited mobility in the favour of the upper castes. An exploitative system which has the capacity to enroll the best of whatever rank and origin in its own service is far more pernicious and long-lasting than the one which is absolutely closed and static.



However, Kosambi made a very important observation that 'caste is class at the primitive level of production.' The division of society into four categories and the separation of the brahmana and the kshatriya elite groups in an hierarchical manner need not obfuscate the class role of this system. It does not mean that the *varna* or caste system was rooted in a religious principle, the oppression of the pure and the impure, as is assumed by Louis Dumont.<sup>11</sup> The separation may have its roots in the religion of pastoral tribes as is argued by Bruce Lincoln. Cattle-keepers tend to develop two classes of specialists, the fighters, who specialize in cattle-raids and thus increase the stock of cattle in possession of their tribe, and the priests who specialize in cattle-sacrifice and offer to the gods the items which are valued most in their society and in this way obtain the blessings of the gods and ensure the increase of the wealth and prosperity of their tribe through divine favour. It has been shown<sup>12</sup> that the crystallization of the vedic priesthood as the brahmana *varna* was a process simultaneous with the growing complexity and elaboration of the vedic ritual of sacrifice. But the later vedic texts while emphasizing the separation of the brahmana and the kshatriya also speak of their interdependence and opposition to the lower *varnas*.

Thus the *varna* divisions had a historical origin in the real conditions of existence; and these conditions gave rise to an ideology which legitimized exploitation. It was the ideology of the dominant classes and not exclusively of the brahmanas. As Irfan Habib remarked in his presidential address to the Indian History Congress in 1982, the *karma* theory propagated by Buddhism and Jainism provided a powerful justification to the caste doctrine, and the principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence legitimized the hatred of the land-owning peasantry towards the hunting tribes, who were forest-dwellers and who must have come in conflict with the agrarian expansionists coveting and appropriating the forest land. The early Buddhist texts denounce the hunters and forest tribes as *hinajatis* and the *Aitareya Brahmana* speaks of such communities as *nicyas* and *apacyas* who had their own chiefs.<sup>13</sup> It should be kept in mind that the landowning agriculturists of the sixth century B.C., the *gahapatis* of the monarchical kingdoms and the *khattiya* clans of the *gana-rajyas* constituted the dominant classes and their socio-economic status was quite different from that of the depressed peasantry of the early medieval times. It is in the Buddhist Nikayas of the third century B.C. or thereabout that the notion of the pure and the impure *jatis* appears for the first time. Thus the *varna* ideology of the pure and the impure castes emerges as the ideology of the dominant classes; and it is only natural that the brahmanas being priests and ideologues should become its chief spokesmen.

We would like to emphasize that we do not regard the *varna* system and its ideology as a priestly invention but an expression of the

dominant material relationships prevailing in society. This ideology pervaded even the Buddhist and the Jain world-views with the difference that these religions contested the hierarchical position and the higher ritual status of the brahmanas above the kshatriyas. But as we have argued elsewhere,<sup>14</sup> the *varna* ideology helped in securing the *structured dependence* of the landless labour in the form of untouchables or the so-called menial castes and sustained the nexus of *jajmani* relationship built around the landowner in a petty mode of production. Hence, even when empirical reality had transformed itself from the fourfold *varna* stratification of later vedic times to a complex *jati* structure of the Gupta and post-Gupta times, the *jati* system derived its legitimation from the *varna* ideology and the concept of the *panchama* (fifth) *varna* and the *varnasamkara* (birth of new castes through intermixing of *varnas*) were floated<sup>15</sup> in order to provide theoretical explanation of the new situation. One need not regard these theoretical exercises as the 'diabolical designs' of the 'cunning' brahmana thinkers. People think and act in terms of how they see the world and consciously try to find solutions within their own frame of reference. However, the dominant class is able to impose its own perceptions and its own consciousness on the whole society; and it is the role of the ideology to secure the acceptance of the exploited.

Nevertheless, how was this ideology internalized by the lower classes? Why were they not able to perceive its true character? We have remarked earlier that in actual practice the system allowed the incorporation of alien and aboriginal peoples into the caste society without destroying their kin-structure, customs, etc. While the majority of such groups being poor and backward inflated the categories of the sudra *varna*, their chiefly and priestly lineages gained admittance to the brahmana or kshatriya *varnas*. This has been amply illustrated by the well-known studies of the Abhiras, Gurjaras and the Bhumijis. This kind of mobility added strength to one system to recruit new members to the ruling and dominant classes without any need for a revolutionary change or conflict. If there were tensions and resentment at the lower levels, these could not have done anything more than increase the feeling of group-solidarity and cohesiveness. The hierarchy of the *varna-jati* was based on the petty mode of production and hence it continued to regulate social relations.

However, *varna* ideology originated as an ideology of hierarchy legitimizing social inequality; and it played a seminal role in transforming semi-pastoral communities into stratified agricultural communities and the emergence of early states. With the growth of a more complex socio-political formation in the centuries preceeding and succeeding the Christian era changed economic facts led to certain modifications in the traditional notion of the *varnas*, and it is interesting to note how the *varna* ideology has made from time to time certain adjustments in those spheres which were in conflict with the

material reality while retaining its formal static appearance owing to its religious colouring. To elucidate, initially those who were engaged in cattle-keeping and agriculture were regarded as vaishyas. They formed a part of the 'twice-born' community and as such were close to the upper two *varnas*. The category of the *shudras* comprised of the marginal peoples reduced to domestic slavery or landless agricultural labour providing service to the upper three *varnas*. But with the greater availability of surplus the gulf between those who were engaged in manual labour and those who were able to appropriate the fruits of such labour by controlling the means of production widened; and this resulted in the socio-economic degradation of peasants and primary producers. But as the early Buddhist sources indicate, the well-to-do peasant could invest his surplus in trade, which brought him prestige and prosperity. Henceforth, those who used their own or their families' labour in agriculture or crafts came to be known as *shudras* and a vaishya was one who was primarily a trader. We have suggested elsewhere<sup>16</sup> that one of the reasons why the vaishya communities adopted or patronized Jainism was the fact that Jainism took the doctrine of *ahimsa* to its extreme and denounced agriculture as it involved the killing of the insects. Thus Jainism could help a vaishya in raising his status above the depressed peasant by emphasizing his distance from manual agricultural activities.

Changes in the conception of what constitutes a 'vaishya' or a 'shudra' are inter-related and have a profound significance for the history of the caste system. The original four *varna* stratification developed in the later vedic times in the Western half of the Ganga basin including the Doab in the region extending from nearabout Delhi to Patna, the area which was known as Aryavarta. To this date this area has communities assignable to all the four *varnas*. But in the age of the Buddha and of the early Pali texts (600 B.C.—300 B.C.) the hunting and food-gathering tribes were condemned by the peasant communities as *hina-jatis* or low castes. Their assimilation in the expanding Aryan society as 'shudras' meant the increase and diversification of the *shudra varna* which came to have depressed communities at various levels of development. This divergence became even more pronounced in eastern and the southern India, where Aryan culture made significant inroads in the Gupta and post-Gupta times and powerful land-owning peasant communities engaged in agriculture were ranked as *shudras* in accordance with the northern notions of *varna* during this period. Hence, the Kalitas of Assam, the Kaibartas of Bengal and the Reddis and the Vellalas of the South were all dubbed as *shudras*. This development led to a dilution of the notion of 'shudra' especially in these areas. These areas also had culturally backward like the Pallans, Pariyans and Madigas in the South and the Namasudras, Doms, Abors and Kaibartas in the East. Such a complex structure could hardly be explained on the basis of the earlier

functional theory of the origin of the four *varnas*. The notion of the *panchama varna*, although floated, could not take deep roots owing to its lack of scriptural sanction in the Purusha-sukta hymn. But the theory of the origin of numerous castes of varying statuses from the inter-mixing of the *varnas* was found more useful; as in shifting the emphasis from the occupational criterion to the question of the degree of purity-impurity arising out of the union of the original founder-parents, it allowed much scope for the placement of the newly enrolled communities in an hierarchical manner commensurate with their material condition. Thus, those who were deemed born of approved *anuloma* order following the rules of hypergamy had a 'pure' status and those who were the children of the disapproved hypogamous *pratiloma* unions were impure. It should be noted that the impurity did not arise from impure occupations; rather, those who were born of impure unions, that is those who had an impure birth were condemned to follow impure occupations. Thus the theory buttressed the caste patriarchies and reinforced the hereditary nature of the hierarchical social structure. It is only in a situation of such shift in the *varna* theory that the Reddy kings of Andhra could take pride in being shudras having been born from the feet of Vishnu<sup>17</sup> and in the Akkalapundi grant, the panegyrist of Singaya Nayak could claim that the shudra *varna* was purer than the other three *varnas*, as it was born along with the river Bhagirathi (from the feet of Vishnu)!

Modern industry has replaced the petty mode of production which favoured craft-exclusiveness on a non-competitive basis. It has eroded the notions of hierarchy of castes, untouchability taboos on inter-dining, etc., at least in the urban areas where its impact is felt. But the prohibition on inter-caste marriage is still practised widely as this element of the caste system is not in conflict with the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, endogamy almost invariably means arranged marriages on considerations of wealth, power and status and as such is well-impregnated with the capitalist value system. As a matter of fact in some aspects the strength of the caste has even increased in modern times and caste ideology may be said to be undergoing another transformation. It has been pointed out that the traditional *jajmani* type of personal exchange relationships between the various castes of a village are now being increasingly replaced by the contractual, pecuniary and impersonal relationships under the influence of the capitalist market forces, with the result that in times of adversity one has to depend on the members of one's own caste to provide group-support. The present day politics too allows the elite of a caste to exploit the caste-consciousness of their castemen in order to compete with the elite groups of other castes and communities for political power. Thus caste ideology gains strength both for political and economic reasons in spite of the fact that there are increasing differentiations of wealth and status of individuals within each caste.

*Division and Difference in the  
'Discipline' of Economics\*\**

The existence and unity of a discipline called economics reside in the eye and mind of the beholder. The perception of economics as unity and disciplinarity, itself, arises in some, but not all, of the different schools of thought that we would loosely categorize as economic. Indeed, as we hope to show, the presumption of unity and disciplinarity—the idea that there is a center or 'core' of propositions, procedures, and conclusions or a shared historical 'object' of theory and practice—is suggested in the concepts and methods of some schools of economic thought, but is opposed by others. Further, we argue that the portrayal of economics as a discipline with distinct boundaries is often a discursive strategy by one school or another to hegemonize the field of economic discourse. In this way, the issue of the existence of an economics discipline and its principles of unity or dispersion is in part a political question. Its effects are felt in the hiring and firing of economic professors and practitioners, the determination of what comprises an economics curriculum, the determination of what is legitimate economic argument and what is not, the dispensation of public and private grant monies, and the differential entry into or exclusion from ideological, political, and economic centers of power and decision making.

Our view is that no discipline of economics exists. Or, rather, no unified discipline exists. The 'discipline' of economics is actually an agonistic and shifting field of fundamentally different and often conflicting discourses. The dispersion and divisions that exist between the schools of thought we discuss here as 'economic' may have some regularities. But we do not see closer contiguity of these economic schools when placed on a horizontal among, to take just one example, all

---

\* University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

\*\* This paper was presented originally at the conference entitled 'Disciplinary: Formations, Rhetorics, Histories' at the University of Minnesota in April 1989.

of the many different 'disciplinary' forms of Marxian thought. That is, in our view, Marxian 'economic' thought shares more concepts, approaches, and methods—may have more discursive regularity—with Marxian literary theory than do Marxian economic thought and neoclassical economic theory.

The comparison of Marxian economic thought and literary theory is instructive. While we cannot develop all of the many points of commonality between these discursive forms, we call attention to a few that may help readers in comprehending our claim that the disciplinary bounds of a singular 'economics'—marking its distance from non-economic disciplines—can only uneasily be drawn. Some of the key concepts and methods that may be shared (sometimes, we note, as objects of criticism) by the various traditions and discursive forms within Marxism include a commitment to 'historical' analysis, the notions of dialectics and contradiction, a focus on the conditions of existence or 'mode of production' of discursive and non-discursive events, a close concern with the relation of these events to socioeconomic class, and an explicit recognition and engagement with the political determinations and effects of theoretical practice. We should state that since Marxism is itself comprised of diverse and often contradictory discourses, these concepts enter into the various traditions to different degrees and with different understandings.

Yet, a quick glimpse at Marxian literary theory over the past 20 years, for example in the work of Fredric Jameson (1971, 1981) Terry Eagleton (1976, 1983, 1986), Pierre Macherey (1978), Raymond Williams (1977), and Michel Pecheux (1982), demonstrates a shared discursive terrain with various kinds of Marxian economic thought.<sup>1</sup> For Jameson, for example, the determination of the meanings and effects of literary narratives—their specific, concrete historicities—is combined with an effort to locate such narratives within the context of the forms of historical production of the non-discursive as well. Indeed, this context provides a necessary grid through which narratives must be read. Hence, in his critique of postmodernism, Jameson (1984) presents this latest cultural form as such a narrative (or set of narratives) whose meanings and effects must be placed within the broader historical conditions—of 'late capitalism'—where it resides, is nourished, and for which it provides important cultural underpinnings. Eagleton (1976), following Macherey and Louis Althusser, calls attention to the concrete modes of production of particular literary forms, but also reminds the reader that the *means* of literary production within any such mode cannot be limited to discursive elements alone. Thus, an understanding of the historical conditions of literary production is a crucial ingredient in 'reading' texts since the meanings of these texts change in response to changes in their production and, in some readings, may be shown to 'represent,' reflect, or, at least, to narrativize the historical conditions of their production.

In Marxian economics, the emphasis is on the historical conditions that complexly determine production and expanded reproduction, distribution and consumption, and especially on the conditions that give rise to a multiplicity of class processes and positions. The idea that any concept or event, from the accumulation of capital to market transactions, must be 'read' discursively as historically produced and conditioned provides a necessary background for most Marxist economic positions. That is, over and against the neoclassical tendency to treat particular key concepts as 'given,' such as the rational 'individual' who enters trade (theoretically) with his/her intentions as fully formed, many Marxist economists deconstruct all such 'givens' in order to problematize the historical conditions of existence of all concepts, methods, events, and so forth. It is not that Marxist economists focus exclusively on the realm of the production of material goods and services; rather, many Marxist economists treat every economic activity and agent, the processes and agents of distribution and consumption as well as of production, as 'produced' and worthy of an analysis of its historical conditions of existence, i.e., its location in an intricate network of concrete determinations.

Likewise, in Jameson, Eagleton, and others, the analysis of the historical determinations and resonances of narratives, texts, and so forth, proceeds according to concepts of change and transformation derived, more properly, from Marxian categories of dialectics and contradiction. Whether in its sophisticated Hegelian form (as with Georg Lukács and Jameson) or in its Althusserian form (as with Macherey and Pêcheux), the notion that cognition, meaning, and literary production are bound up with some idea of contradiction and dialectical determination distinguishes most Marxist forays into literary theory. In Lukács (1964, 1971), for example, the possibility for the emergence of European 'realism' in the works of Balzac, Tolstoy, etc. can only be understood in terms of its historical conditions of existence—discursive and non-discursive—and the contradictions within and between realism, prior literary 'genres' (such as 'romanticism' and 'naturalism') and these historical conditions. Indeed, for Lukács, the progressivity, fullness, and use of realism or of any literary form had to be measured in terms of its potential to overcome fragmentation and contradiction—to produce a complex 'totality'—between the many 'sides' of its discursive and non-discursive objects. Though in a different way from Lukács, Eagleton (at least in 1976) and Macherey also employ a conception of contradiction, one that implies the 'overdetermination' of literary elements in which the contradictions and unevennesses within and between these elements and their conditions of production give rise to their distinct meanings and effects.

Many Marxist economists, too, produce their work with the aid of concepts of contradiction and dialectical movement. From the contra-

dictions between the use and exchange values of commodities to the conflicts and struggles between classes, most versions of Marxian economics are constructed with and through a framework that stresses opposition, unevenness, and change. In contrast, neoclassicals and most Keynesians have little place for such a framework. Not only do they follow modern positivists in rejecting as meaningless the Hegelian concept of dialectical contradiction (that something could be A and not-A simultaneously), they reject all ensuing dialectical logic as incompatible with positive notions of causal determination and with non-tautological discursive presentations. Likewise, the overriding importance of equilibrium, rationality, and harmony for much neoclassical theory prevents, in advance, a discourse structured according to contradiction and change. As one small sign of these preventative measures, neoclassical economists have no use for concepts of class and class division since, in their view, only individuals exist and, as they show, when given the maximum of freedom, these individuals can produce market situations in which harmony and self-satisfaction, not conflict and exploitation, result. Contradiction and 'uneven development' are not discursive means of production in neoclassical thought.

Marxian economists and literary theorists are most close, we would argue, in their inclusion and investigation of 'political' concerns as one of the prime means of discursive production. To be clear, it is not that neoclassical and Keynesian thought are 'nonpolitical.' It is rather that much energy is spent to efface and ignore the political constitution of such thought. Of course, much of this effacement takes place in the name of science, but in any event, most mainstream economic thought considers itself to be politically and ideologically disinterested. Again, in the cases of Jameson, Eagleton, Macherey, Lukács Pecheux, Williams and others, the political meanings and effects of literary texts and the criticism of such texts are emphasized and explicitly theorized. From Jameson's revelation of the 'political unconscious' constituting both narrative forms and their analysis to Eagleton's imperative that to do literary theory and read literature one must start from a politically-implicated point of view or 'critical counterspace,' Marxist literary theorists seem most often to accept Althusser's claim that to be a Marxist means to practise a form of political struggle in the realm of theory. Needless to say, most Marxist economists regard their discourse to be interwoven throughout with concepts and objects of analysis that call attention to oppositional political positions. Here, history, dialectics, class, and so forth, combine to produce, in different versions no doubt, a 'ruthless criticism of everything existing,' the oppositional political stance that Marx himself believed undergirded his own theoretical endeavors.

While there are vast differences between different schools of Marxist thought, much of the disagreement takes place over the purport of the aforementioned concepts and methods and, thus, on a



common terrain. In contrast, the discursive differences between Marxian and neoclassical thought, for example, are rarely over the particular meanings and application of these concepts, etc., because Marxists and neoclassicals most often do not recognize each other's discursive elements to be their own. For the sake of completeness, however, we note that close complementarity between types of economic theory and other disciplinary formations is not unique to Marxism. For example, we believe that neoclassical economic thought may be more contiguous as a 'discipline' with contemporary behavioral psychology and Parsonian sociology than with Marxian economic thought.

Our view of the connections and divisions between 'economic' schools rejects the organizing premise of most mainstream history of economic thought, which sees all of the modern economic discourses (to the extent that it recognizes their independent existence) as having a common parentage (and in this way, establishing the historical meaning of the term 'discipline') in Adam Smith and Classical Political Economy. Since we are skeptical of presentations of the history of any discipline which stress its historical continuity through the incessant 'growth of knowledge,' we prefer to think of the history of economics as a series of breaks and revolutions, a history, for example, in which Marx's theoretical accomplishments are seen as a decisive rupture from Classical Political Economy rather than (as Keynes [1936] implied and Samuelson [1957] stated) the work of a minor post-Ricardian.<sup>2</sup> In this discontinuist historical approach, we can imagine an argument that Keynes, likewise, represents a decisive break, though we note that except for the Post Keynesian group, Keynes's 'revolution' has been treated more as a modification of neoclassical theory (and, hence, mostly compatible with this theory) than a new way of doing economics.<sup>3</sup>

Our understanding of the history of our 'discipline' and of its present status thus leads us to stress the incommensurability that often shapes conversation (or lack thereof) among and between the schools that are presumed to make it up. It is important for readers to recognize, however, that the view we have just presented is, itself, consistent with the premises of the school of thought from which we draw our paramount inspiration. In keeping with our general outlook, we affirm that our view of the unity and formation of an economics discipline is linked to a particular discursive practice and a primary intellectual and political commitment to one school of thought: Marxism. As Marxists, we view the American economics discipline and its dominant neoclassical and Keynesian discourses through the lens of the central concepts of Marxian thought, such as contradiction, struggle, overdetermination, and class, and through our life experiences as Marxist economists in the midst of an often hostile profession. From our Marxian perspective, the acceptance by the media, universities, libraries, and various state bureaucracies and their branches, among other institu-

tions and agents, of the existence of an economics discipline has served partly to silence minority positions, like those of (but not exclusively) Marxists. Although some forms of excluding and silencing minority positions in economic discourse are blatant and transparent, the more subtle, effective, and perhaps insidious forms may be attached to the concepts of difference and the realm of their application that are part of the dominant neoclassical and Keynesian research programs.

In this paper, we take up the following issues. First, we discuss the divergent concepts of difference and discipline that comprise the central ideas regarding the epistemological status and methodological procedures of neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian schools of thought. Next, we compare and contrast, from our perspective, these different schools' discursive 'entry points' and the effects of these entry points on structuring the theoretical frameworks of each school and on conceptualizing differences between these frameworks.<sup>4</sup> In focusing on epistemology, method, entry point, and the structure of discourse, we hope to show that the notions of difference which arise within each framework give rise to different summary judgements regarding the existence of an economics discipline, its unity, and the cultural and political effects of these judgements.

#### DIFFERENCE AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN ECONOMICS

Economists have yet to rejoice in the coming of postmodernism, as have their sisters and brothers in other fields.<sup>5</sup> At least for the moment, modernism and its many manifestations still have pride of place in the hearts and minds of most economists. Within the different schools of thought we discuss here, the modernist premise of the discursive primacy of a scientific epistemology and method is widely espoused and is one of the main ways in which the very differences between schools are conceived. The 'scientism' characteristic of most contemporary economists is derived largely from the adoption in the past 40 years of positivist epistemology and its prescriptions for a scientific discipline.<sup>6</sup> Although neoclassicals, Keynesians, Marxists (and others) may understand positivism in different ways and may even attempt to wed positivism to other positions in epistemology and methodology, the main premises of positivism constitute the norm in defenses of the scientificity of this or that theoretical view. Economists of all stripes regularly recite the strengths of positivism, particularly its blend of empiricism in the justification of testable hypotheses and of rationalism in the 'discovery' and deductive formulation of hypotheses and laws. The positivist notion of science that results is instrumental in marking the boundaries between the different schools of economic thought.

Usually, the differences that this emphasis on scientificity promotes revolve around the question of the verifiability of statements and propositions arising in each distinct school. Simply put, the

positivist notion of science is used to differentiate between the knowledge that results from empirical testing and the non-knowledge (ideology? faith?) that results from statements which are impervious to such tests. The standard of empirical veracity, as the determinant in the last instance of the scientificity of a statement, is both built on and constitutes the terms error, deviation, truth, falsity, and so on, all of which denote the differences between types of statements and also between the frameworks from which they arise. Although positivists have no monopoly in the use of the idea of science and of such terms of difference as error, truth, etc., the particular use devotees of a positivist epistemology make of the idea of scientificity structures to a very large degree the ways economists make sense of the boundaries that separate their frameworks from others.<sup>7</sup> Put baldly, positivism has been an extremely useful weapon in allowing one school of thought to characterize the differences between it and others as one of truth vs. falsity, rigor vs. error, modification vs. deviation, and so forth.

Three examples must suffice for now. First, in *The Methodology of Economics*, the well-known philosopher and historian of economics, Mark Blaug, poses the following difference between most neoclassical thought and Marxism. Marx (and Marxists), like John Stuart Mill before him, promoted a view of the epistemological status of his propositions that resists empirical testing. Marx presented his most important theoretical 'laws' in terms of tendencies. In so doing, Marx, like Mill, adduced that any empirical test of his propositions may fail to verify these propositions not because the evidence clearly contradicts them but, rather, because of 'counteracting tendencies' which were understood to be occurring at the same time of the original tendency suggested by the 'law.' Thus in Blaug's view, for example, Marx's 'law of the falling rate of profit' can never be falsified because any Marxist might claim that the reason for the data not fitting the predictions of the law may be any one of several counteracting tendencies Marx enumerated in his discussion of the law.

In Blaug's view, then, the Marxian idea of a tendency law can never give rise to truly scientific (read positivist) practice. In this way, although fascinated with the discursive structure of Marx's thought, Blaug ultimately refuses to treat Marxian economic thought (insofar as it reproduces tendency laws and does not employ Karl Popper's neopositivist standards for falsifiability) as productive of economic science. Marxism is, therefore, beyond the pale of what could legitimately be called modern economic thought. In a historical sense, Marxism may be part of the economics discipline, since until this century all economic thought was epistemologically and methodologically shoddy, while all schools of thought did share common objects of analysis. But with the rise of positivism, only the neoclassical and Keynesian schools have shown themselves (with notable lapses) capable of embracing positivist norms of scientific practice. Marxists,

by insisting on the Hegelian notion of dialectical contradiction and on tendency laws (thereby violating the all-important *ceteris paribus* assumption), have been left behind in the shaping of the discipline. Indeed, Blaug's depiction of the fortunes of Marxism since the rise of positivism in economics suggests that its adherents have strayed far from the true course of science and, instead, have retained their commitment to Marx's precepts as a matter of faith. Marxism is neither in the discipline, nor is there any discipline in Marxism.

As a second example, the Marxist economist, John Roemer (1988), has advocated what he and others call 'analytical Marxism'.<sup>8</sup> Analytical Marxism differs from other traditions partly by its insistence that 'good science' requires the acceptance and use of primarily positivist epistemological and methodological norms. So, Roemer, Jon Elster (1985), and others, reject as unscientific many of Marxian economics' traditional concepts and procedures, especially the ones that have been tainted by Hegelianism or, more recently, by structuralism. The 'labor theory of value,' dialectics, the law of the falling rate of profit, among other things, must all be discarded because in some way or other they have prevented or forestalled the use of scientific (read positivist) concepts and procedures in Marxian thought. In particular, Roemer, Elster, et al. replace the concepts of collective action and of the structural determination of agents' behavior by what they call 'methodological individualism.' They undertake this shift from 'macro' to 'micro' foundations for Marxian thought primarily because of their view that a real science builds its conceptions of cause and effect between social entities from an atomistic base. Thus, if Marxism is to have any place within modern economic thought, it must be grounded, as is neoclassical thought, on the intentional behavior of individual agents. With the aid of methodological individualism, Marxian economic thought can be reconstituted, but only if Marxists carefully employ the scientific methods which already characterize neoclassical economic thought. That is, the key reason for adopting methodological individualism is its firm location as the starting point for any social 'science,' as in neoclassical theory.

Roemer and the other analytical Marxists do not, like Blaug, use their notions of correct scientific epistemology to differentiate between 'good' neoclassical thought and 'bad' Marxian theory. Rather, the analytical Marxists are interested in bringing Marxism into the mainstream of the economics discipline. If an economics discipline exists (and Roemer never seems to question this), then the changes in Marxism which must take place are designed to make it epistemologically consistent with the prevailing positivist wisdom. As a Marxist, when Roemer gets to his criticism of neoclassical and Keynesian thought, it is more a matter of pointing out the contradictions or oversights (e.g., property and its role in preference formation) in their internal concepts or noting their occasional abandoning of the correct

scientific procedures they have previously embraced. For Roemer and the analytical Marxists, differences between the discipline of economics and *non*-analytical Marxism are to be understood as a matter of the nonscientific concepts and procedures of the latter, while the differences between analytical Marxism and the mainstream economic views (while politically important) are differences which rarely, if ever, threaten the existence and unity of the economic discipline.

Third, and on a different terrain, many Post Keynesians challenge neoclassicals on the grounds that the unreality of the initial assumptions of neoclassical propositions and the tendency of neoclassical economists to present these propositions through a highly abstract, mathematical (but not statistical) axiomatic system contradict the neoclassical claim that it produces scientific knowledge. The essays in *Why Economics is Not Yet a Science* (Eichner 1982) represent the Post Keynesians' attack on neoclassical economists (as well as on their 'bastard Keynesian' siblings)<sup>9</sup> for having abandoned empirical testing and realistic assumptions as the bases for scientific procedure. While some Post Keynesians are aware that their view of science marks a departure from positivist dogma, they nonetheless retain positivism's faith that the ultimate test of a proposition lies in its empirical verification or falsification. And indeed, more like the early positivists (but not Popper), the Post Keynesians renew the search for an objective language, one somehow mirroring reality, as the scientifically correct medium for stating potentially testable propositions and their founding assumptions.<sup>10</sup> So, the Post Keynesian anger at the positivist view (first put forward by Milton Friedman [1953]) that the assumptions of economic theory need not be realistic (Friedman goes so far as to advocate the clear unreality of assumptions) leads them to chastise neoclassical theory and to show, in an ironic twist, that the neoclassical school is built on its own ideology and faith (in the beneficence of competitive capitalism) and not on science. For many Post Keynesians, the discipline of economics, insofar as it is a scientific discipline, should not include neoclassical thought. Once again, difference here is understood in terms of science vs. ideology and becomes a matter for excommunication.

These examples and many others we could conjure up imply that where the epistemological distinction between scientific and non-scientific knowledge shapes a discipline (as it has in economics), then the types of differences permitted within the bounds of science are controlled such that the discipline will not be fragmented. Instead, these differences are articulated in relation to an accepted 'core' of the discipline. However, wherever differences cannot be articulated in relation to this core, they run the risk of being read as non-scientific, and, therefore, outside the bounds of the discipline.

A case in point is the understanding economists of most schools have of the positive/normative distinction introduced into economics in the

late 19th century by John Neville Keynes, but elaborated thoroughly in positivist philosophical terms by Friedman in 1953. According to this distinction, positive economics is comprised of all assumptions, statements, propositions, and laws whose internal linkages make up the body of testable hypotheses and their predictions. Positive economics is distinguished from normative economics in that the latter body of assumptions, statements, etc. are not testable. In normative economics we find all forms of values, opinions, ideologies, judgements, and so forth.

This neat distinction then illuminates one source of irresolvable difference between schools of economic thought. Since all differences between positive hypotheses can be adjudicated through scientific practice, they cannot be long-lasting, nor can their temporary existence and proliferation destroy the unity of the discipline. Indeed, the unity of the discipline is confirmed by the addition to knowledge that each non-falsified (or verified) hypothesis contributes. So, if differences do persist and either are not resolved through empirical testing or are resistant to testing itself, then these differences are of the order of normative disagreements. Economic scientists are willing to acknowledge the existence of these disagreements as long as we do not think of these different statements as belonging to the core of the discipline. The source of these disagreements can be adherence to divergent ideological or political positions, individual and non-transferable experiences, religious and ethical stances, or even cynical self-interest.

Normative economics is, thus, the proper realm for politics, power, ideology, culture, and interest. But the intrusion of normative formulations into the realm of positive economics disrupts the presumably disinterested scientific practice of the discipline. The pluralism which is hailed by neoclassicals and Keynesians (and others) as a hallmark of respectful conversation and of tolerated differences about policy matters in a democratic society has no place in the constitution and reproduction of economic science. Rather, pluralism's proper location is in the realm of norms, values, and so forth. A hundred flowers may bloom, but not in the economic scientist's laboratory. Flowers, it seems, are relegated to the gardens of normativity outside the laboratory window.

Hence, when we encounter the continued insistence of practitioners from one school of thought to uphold a discredited or improperly formulated hypothesis or theory, this can be traced purely to the influence of the values and norms—not of a scientific sort—that comprise normative judgements. Keynesians will jeer at neoclassical theories of savings and investments partly because of the former's belief that the neoclassical view is based less on empirical tests and data accumulation than on the latter's presumption and ideological commitment to the efficacy of competitive markets. Likewise, Keynesians and neoclassicals will often join forces to label as 'religion'

the persistence of Marxism in the face of the presumed failure of all of Marx's testable historical propositions (like the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and for long-term economic crisis to result).

When all else fails, the dominant explanation of persistent and irreconcilable difference is the operation of power, values, interests, and so forth. In this way, the terms of disinterested, neutral science make clear which schools of thought are 'really' in the economics discipline and which ones are 'really' better suited for sociology, political science, theology, philosophy, and so on. At the moment, minority positions in economics are most often characterized as outside of the discipline by the dominant schools, whose advocacy of positivism is a potent weapon in retaining their dominance. This characterization, by the way, explains in our view the restrained reception by diehard neoclassicals and Keynesians accorded to Donald McCloskey's (1985) attack on modernism and positivism in economics in favor of a 'rhetoric of economics.' Although we wish it were otherwise (since we see our work as making a similar point), not a few of his colleagues have shown themselves reluctant to give up the notion of science as a means of discriminating between what they, as neoclassical and Keynesian economists, do and say and what Marxists, institutionalists, radicals, Austrians and others do and say.

Though we cannot detail them here, there have been strong movements against the reign of positivism and economic modernism in some of the schools. Both McCloskey and Arjo Klamer (1983; see also their essays in Klamer, McCloskey, and Solow 1988) have written extensively in opposition to the scientism of modernist economics and to the epistemological privilege that one group or another has claimed for its formulations. Their work, on the terrain of neoclassical and Keynesian theory respectively, is indebted to the criticisms of positivism promulgated by Richard Rorty, Thomas Kuhn, and others (particularly certain cultural and literary theorists and rhetoricians, such as Wayne Booth).

Our own work (Resnick and Wolff 1987, Amariglio 1987) on the terrain of Marxism likewise promotes an epistemological position from Marx that rejects empiricism and rationalism in all of their forms (including positivism). It is no accident, in our view, that we share with McCloskey and Klamer an interest in understanding the reasons for differences between economists without being tempted into proclaiming, on epistemological grounds alone, one or another discourse as outside the discipline. The Marxist epistemology we advocate and have discussed elsewhere has no pretension to hegemonize economic science on the criteria of its closer approximation to the 'correct way' of understanding economic phenomena. In this way, our position is 'anti-essentialist' on the question of knowledge. That is, since we believe both rationalism and empiricism (and their variants) proceed from the premise of interdiscursive 'truth,' the essence of which is to be

discovered by the subject of knowledge (the scientist), we call our position, which rejects the presumption of interdiscursive truth (as well as the subject-object distinction upon which such theories of knowledge are built), anti-essentialist. However, among other differences with Klammer and McCloskey, our anti-essentialist epistemological views are reinforced by our rejection of causal essentialism—such as reductionism—in economic theory, a rejection at which we think McCloskey and even Klammer may balk. We discuss below what a thoroughly non-essentialist Marxism means and how it refuses to minimize differences between economic schools, whose vain hopes are to define a unified discipline.

#### 'ENTRY POINTS,' DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES, AND CONCEPTS OF DIFFERENCE

In addition to using epistemological standards to differentiate themselves and to theorize the core of their discipline, schools of economic thought also employ other 'substantive' (and not methodological) concepts to mark the boundaries of the discipline. We will focus on the 'entry points' of these schools as well as on some central concepts which comprise the structure of these diverse economic discourses. A few words of explanation are in order. First, we mean by 'entry point' the concept or concepts which a theorist uses to enter into, to begin, discourse about some object of analysis. This entry point can be, but need not be, an 'essence'—the primary 'truth' and/or the primary determinant cause—in the discourse that results. What all entry points do have in common, nevertheless, is that they are the primary concepts through which a particular analysis of some social activity is undertaken. An entry point is a concept which will distinctively shape the asking of all questions and which will condition (and be conditioned by) all other concepts within a discourse. For example, we argue that the entry point of neoclassical economics, that concept to which all other concepts are linked or from which they derive, is the combined notion of individual preferences, resource endowments, and technology. In contrast, Marxian economics, we believe, is a discourse whose entry point is most often class.<sup>11</sup> Again, the idea of an entry point, such as class, does not mean that in the elaboration of the social theory constructed by use of such a concept it is necessarily the primary truth or ultimately determinant cause of all other concepts and activities designated by these concepts.

To clarify matters, we note that in much economic and social analysis, there is a long history linking the essentialism characteristic of empiricist and rationalist epistemologies with the essentialism in which a particular entry point is conceived as the determinant cause or historical origin for social behavior and institutions. Although epistemological essentialism and causal essentialism (or reductionism) can be distinct—there is no necessary connection between the two—in neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian discourses, they have often



served to condition and reinforce one another. To take one example, in certain versions of Marxian thought, borrowing substantially from Hegel, a distinction is made between 'appearance' and 'essence.' In Marx's early works, he makes frequent reference to a method of analysis that would permit the discovery of the essences of history and socioeconomic existence beneath those appearances which had, for example, preoccupied and led astray Smith, Ricardo, and other Classical Political Economists. Indeed, the early Marx connected the epistemological issue of dissipating the chimera of mystifying appearances to uncover underlying truths—the epistemological essences—with a discussion of the proper discursive process which could allow a social theorist, intent on penetrating the world of veils, to proceed from 'abstract,' one-sided, and apparent perceptions of the real to a 'concrete,' many-sided analysis of the same.

For this version of Marxism, the point of moving from the abstract to the concrete is, in fact, to discover the ultimate determinant or cause—the 'objective' truth or essence—of social life and history. In Marx's more economic determinist phases, this essence was identified alternatively with the mode of material production or classes. Marxists who have remained faithful to such determinism have thus argued that the foundationalist epistemological question—the discovery of interdiscursive truth, or the truth of things 'in themselves'—cannot be separated from an identification of the essential cause—the cause 'in the last instance'—determining social life. In much traditional Marxism, then, the search for determining causes (reductionism) is identified with the discovery of essential, supradiscursive truths.

While entry points may or may not be treated as fundamental truths or as ultimate causes in concrete explanations, they often serve as another means of discriminating between economic discourses that are part of the discipline and those that fall outside of that discipline. From the point of view of one school or another, the content and use of the entry point may construct this school's attempts to define the limits of its discipline. Note that an entry point may be more powerful than the 'object of analysis' in determining for a school of thought what it has in common or in contrast with other schools. For example, while some economists may accept any statements regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods and services as contained within the discipline of economics, others may feel that any approach to this object which does not look at it from the starting point of individual preferences cannot be a proper economic discourse. Thus, for example, neoclassicals who advocate seeing all economic activities as the consequences of intentional individual choice may regard a class analysis of market capitalism as founded on an entry point that is appropriate for sociology, perhaps, but not economics. Likewise, some Marxists state that since individual

preferences is a 'bourgeois illusion,' then any discourse which proceeds from this notion is neither scientific, nor, perhaps, economic.

In what follows, we provide our own differentiation between three major schools of economic thought. Our discussion will highlight the different entry points of these schools. In relation to these entry points, however, we are interested in asking the additional question of whether these beginning concepts are treated as causal essences and/or interdiscursive truths. Our reason for asking this question is that when entry points are conceived as determinant cause and/or essential truth this will have effects on the structure of the discourse and on the possibility of using the entry point as a primary means to theorize the content and limits of the discipline. We are opposed to causal essentialism—reductionism—since we believe that among its effects is the reduction of the complexity of social analysis to a search for singular (and to our minds, partial) causes of all social reality. While causal essentialism deprives social theory of conceptual and descriptive richness, epistemological essentialism is likewise reductionist insofar as it reduces the differences between discourses to a dispute primarily over their respective claims to a superior truth. When linked together, these forms of essentialism lead to the idea that if the essence of social existence can be uncovered, then truth about social existence is transdiscursive, and the search for truth is a matter of the correct method. The political consequences of the insistence on employing a 'correct method' to discover the essence—the Rosetta Stone—of social existence are equally disturbing, as such an insistence lends itself to doctrinal rigidity and dogmatism instead of constant critique.

The two forms of causal essentialism we discuss below are humanism and structuralism. These two forms have been at the heart of most economic and social theory in this century and probably much longer. A discourse in which humanism is the predominant form of causal essentialism is one in which individual human nature is the underlying essence or truth of all consequent concepts and events postulated by the discourse. A discourse in which structuralism is the predominant form is one in which structural totalities, thought to precede all forms of agency, comprise the essential causes of all concepts and events. In economics and elsewhere, it is likely that any discourse contains aspects of both of these forms of causal essentialism to different degrees. However, some of the key debates between schools of economic thought have to do with the predominance of one form in opposition to another. So, for example, despite the fact that neoclassical and Keynesian economics may both be constituted by humanism and structuralism, some of their most heated encounters can be attributed to the different weights each school places on these forms. Neoclassicals may dismiss Keynesians because the latter emphasize 'macro' structures of mass psychology and market power and neglect to ground these structures in the 'micro' decisions of individual households and

consumers. Likewise, Keynesians may dismiss neoclassicals because the latter reduce all activities to individual preferences and, therefore, ignore the impact social institutions and collective rules of behavior have on economic outcomes and on individual preferences. Indeed, in times of great controversy and stress, neoclassicals and Keynesians may define each other as residing outside the bounds of reasonable economic discourse—therefore, outside of the discipline. Entry points wielded as causal essences may, thus, prove to be a most effective means of hegemonizing the field of economic discourse.

A word of warning before we proceed. We are aware of at least two objections readers may have to our following discussion. First, we have singled out for discussion only the neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian schools of thought. In so doing, we have neglected separate discussions of radicals, Austrians, Institutionalists, and others. In painting with very broad strokes, we admit to much simplification and reduction in constituting our different 'schools.' For our purposes, we have chosen not so much to ignore Austrians, et al. as to include them roughly under the heading of one school or another. So, we would place Austrians in with neoclassicals, just as we would include Institutionalists either within the Keynesian or Marxist camps. We believe that our discussion of the entry points that characterize each of the schools we have chosen allows us provisionally to subsume most other groups under these three major schools. Second, we note that within any school there may be enormous differences between competing factions. Our general discussion is not meant to deny these differences, only to suggest that these differences are of another order than the contrast between distinct entry points and the forms of essentialism that often are associated with them.

#### NEOCLASSICAL ECONOMICS: THE REDUCTIONISM OF PHYSICAL AND HUMAN NATURE

The neoclassical theory which arose in the 1860s and 70s in Europe and (a bit later) in the United States is, today, the dominant economic school in the West. Neoclassical theory claims simply to have developed and formalized the essential contributions of Adam Smith on the structure and nature of economies which have as their point of origin the individual's pursuit of self-interest. Smith's view was that self-interest, among all other sentiments, was prominent in structuring an agent's activities, especially those which touched upon the material satisfaction of this self-interest. Smith's view, in contrast to both Thomas Hobbes and mercantilist scholars and practitioners, was that the more or less unrestrained freedom to pursue self-interest (rather than the state) was constitutive of civil society and was the key to economic wealth and growth. Thus, in the absence of state intervention restricting individual freedom, society would prosper peacefully and harmoniously based on a network of free and competitive

markets through which each individual could maximize utility (or satisfaction). In this way, competitive markets could produce a situation where 'the greatest good for the greatest number' would be realized.

Modern neoclassicals have not changed much in Smith's powerful story. Instead, throughout the past 100 years, the main effort has been to take each aspect of Smith's story apart for intense scrutiny and reformulation in order to put it back together within a refurbished and more mathematically sophisticated analytical framework. In our view, contemporary neoclassical economics retains the entry point suggested, but not rigorously presented, by Smith. In particular, neoclassical economics has as its entry point a combination of three primal causes of all economic activities and events. These causes are subjective preferences, resource endowments, and technology. Neoclassical economists create their picture of economic reality by entering discourse through positing these causes at the beginning of analyzing this or that specific economic problem.

We can restate this entry point in the following way. Neoclassical economics is a discourse which starts from a presumption about individual human nature and about physical nature. The presumption about human nature is that human beings are self-interested and use their reason to achieve their egoistic ends. The presumption about physical nature is that, at least relative to human needs (which are additionally presumed to be insatiable), resources are scarce. Thus, self-interested agents must use their reason—they must make choices between alternative uses—about the disposition of their resources in order to realize their ends. The combination of these two presumptions leads to a third: scarce resources are distributed in such a way as to leave most resource owners desirous of exchange in order to realize greater levels of satisfaction than they could by consuming entirely the resources they hold. Finally, because of 'natural' limits to human knowledge and abilities and the resistance of physical nature in giving up its essential truths, the techniques through which resources are combined to produce the objects of satisfaction are limited at any moment in time.

In the use of this composite entry point, however, neoclassical theory most often privileges subjective preferences—the choices of individuals that reflect their rationality in comparing the levels of satisfaction that would result from alternative uses of their resources or of those they trade for. This privilege is accorded because resource endowments and technology are most often treated as natural constraints on the individual's pursuit of self-interest. Whereas self-interest is the 'active' element in the determination of economic activities, the initial distribution of resources and technology are viewed either as 'passive' (but nonetheless brute forces of nature) or as changing in response to a different pattern of preferences.

What is more interesting, from our point of view, is that neoclassical theorists overwhelmingly regard their entry point as the essence of all properly scientific economic thinking. Indeed, neoclassicals are ever intent on challenging opponents to come up with truths regarding economic activity that are more fundamental than the idea that production, distribution, and consumption originate from human intentions and scarcity. Neoclassical discourse claims to have discovered the basic truths about all economic events in their presumptions about human and physical nature, which it takes to be beyond dispute and self-evident. By privileging human nature in their entry point concept, neoclassicals construct a humanist discourse, one in which the rational, intentional, decisionmaking individual—faced with physical constraints—is the well-spring of all consequent events comprising the thereby defined boundary of all 'economic' content.

One way this humanism is manifested is the insistence that all social institutions and collective acts can be reduced to the individual preferences of the agents who comprise such institutions and groups. Thus, neoclassicals are always deconstructing the Keynesian and Marxian structural determinants by showing that, in the last instance, the consumption function, the enterprise, classes, and so on, can be disaggregated to find the 'micro' considerations that lead to the collective results we notice. For example, the so-called grand synthesis between neoclassical and Keynesian theory that Paul Samuelson (Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1988) claimed to have achieved after World War II involves an attempt to show the harmonious coexistence between individual preferences ('micro') and aggregate behavior ('macro'). In fact, perhaps unwittingly, Samuelson's synthesis was a major factor in unleashing the recent fashion of providing 'microfoundations' for Keynesian aggregate categories. The rise of the 'new classical economics,' with its attack on the 'irrational' expectations found in Keynesian 'structuralist' models of the labor and capital markets, is only the latest phase of the neoclassical attempt to replant Keynes's key ideas in a humanist soil.<sup>12</sup>

Another, and related, manifestation of how the neoclassical entry point becomes an essentialism of the human subject is the supreme importance attached to the presumption of rationality in determining economic outcomes. Some economists (and not just neoclassicals) have feared that without this presumption, it would be impossible to theorize economic events because, in this case, no outcome could be linked to a determinant cause—a human intention. One arena in which this fear is expressed is in the debates over the meaning for economic analysis of 'uncertainty.' For example, one interpretation of Keynes's (1936) views on investment behavior stresses the uncertainty entrepreneurs face in making portfolio choices between alternative investment programs. For the most radical of the Keynesians, the complete randomness that uncertainty imposes on choice makes a

mockery of the neoclassical presumption of rationality (but not necessarily choice).<sup>13</sup> Hence, uncertainty marks the bounds between the absence of rational knowledge and random outcomes, on the one side, and rational intentions and knowable (or probable) outcomes on the other. Some economists (e.g., Coddington 1976), in reaction to what they regard as the potentially 'nihilistic' implications of Keynes's formulation of uncertainty, have insisted that some notion of 'rational expectations' and/or knowledge-governed decisionmaking based on a probabilistic calculus must be brought to bear on this problem. Thus, if economic theory is to be possible, it requires the assumption that some form of rational choice take place despite or because of uncertainty. The humanist theoretical project has gone so far, we are sad to report, that a famous radical economist has recently informed his students that without a view of expectations as 'rational,' there can be no economics. As this economist has stated, Keynes and those who hold on to his 'structural' and irrational view of expectations in the face of uncertainty are not doing economics. The power of a humanist entry point should not be understated in any discussion of the ways in which neoclassicals (and others) maintain their discursive dominance in defining the modalities of the discipline.

Neoclassical economists deduce prices, the distribution of income, the level of employment, the level of investment, and so forth, from their entry point. It is not too much to say that the structure of neoclassical economics is, in fact, one of inexorable deduction or derivation from the initial premises. From initial assumptions about a pattern of preferences, an initial endowment of resources, and a given level of technology, one can build (under additional restrictive conditions) to a final and grand 'general equilibrium' through which all prices and quantities are simultaneously determined. Since at least 1 of the 3 primal causes is always taken as 'exogenous' to the model, the lines of causality are unmistakable, as these exogenous concepts are understood to be the determinants (in combination with other factors) of all other results. In neoclassical theory, the entry point is not an effect of other, 'endogenous,' causes, since if it were, it would cease to act as an essence. This produces a fascinating result: the 'causes' affecting the entry point components (preferences, endowments, and technology) are treated as mostly 'non-economic' and should be studied outside of the economics discipline. Those students who have had the bad fortune to ask their neoclassical professors from whence do individual preferences come have had the response (as we did) that such a question is not properly an economic question. In such cases, the student is quickly directed to the nearest psych lab. Economists working within other frameworks who wish to make the study of the determinants of preferences, 'initial' property ownership, or scarcity endogenous to the field of economics run into the frequent neoclassical retort that such work is not within the discipline.

The structure of neoclassical discourse, thus affected by the causal essentialism of its entry point, gives rise to several important concepts whose effects on determining a notion of the economics discourse we now wish to mention. First, under the assumption that freedom to pursue self-interest is unconstrained, rational individuals are 'naturally' assumed to seek to exchange in order to augment their satisfaction in consumption and their resource base. If markets are competitive, in the absence of an abuse of power (by the state or any individual), then markets will function to bring about a result in which all trading partners are satisfied, insofar as each is able to 'maximize utility' subject to income and technical constraints. When such a situation is arrived at, through fluctuations of the exchange rates or prices of goods and services, then the market and each individual is said to be in 'equilibrium.' One of the main areas of neoclassical research is dedicated to establishing the precise conditions under which such equilibrium (in one or all markets simultaneously) will occur and to showing that such equilibrium implies the existence of a 'harmonious state,' one that is optimal in bringing about 'the greatest good for the greatest number.' The concepts of equilibrium and harmony as a result of market transactions are compelling ideas in the defense of free market capitalism.<sup>14</sup> In addition, these concepts and their grounding in the humanism of preferences and the naturalism of scarcity shape a neoclassical response to the idea of intradisciplinary difference.

Radicals and other critics have long noted that equilibrium is a 'static' concept, one that is resistant to notions of continual change and systematic 'disequilibrium.' Additionally, radicals have pointed out that in this neoclassical world, all hostilities between people (and not classes, since, for neoclassical discourse, they do not exist) take the unthreatening form of civilized exchange. Since the outcome of free exchange is one of social harmony and the realization of self-satisfaction, hostilities are immediately diffused by the mechanism of the market. Thus, notions of persistent and irreconcilable hostilities between economic subjects are ruled out or, more likely, are thought to originate 'extra-economically' in the realms of power and ideology. The neoclassical explanation for long-lasting contradictions is that they reflect market imperfections whose source is the distortion of market power, natural limits to 'certain' knowledge, and the restriction of individual freedom (often by the state).

What impact might such concepts have on the neoclassical articulation of the unity and content of the economics discipline? Here, our statements should be taken as suggestions rather than confirmations. We think that a discourse in which all disputes are presumed to be resolved peacefully and statically through markets may tend to view differences which arise between itself and others through this metaphorical lens. To take one example, we have often been told that serious conflicts between economic theories cannot

continue if their defenders are willing to subject their views to the vicissitudes of the 'marketplace for ideas.' Indeed, one notion of the appropriate content for the discipline is that it should be determined by seeing which ideas 'sell' and which have no discernible market. Another example is that since so much emphasis is placed on 'rationality,' then differences cannot persist if reason is brought to bear on economic problems. The insistence, for example, of Marxists on class analysis and value theory is irrational and originates in other, non-rational sources outside the discipline. Or, as another example, since harmonious outcomes are supposed to prevail when a free exchange (of goods or discourse) takes place, then where antagonism prevails, there must be some 'imperfection' in that market arising from ignorance (lack of information), destructive interest, or plain ill will. But, if the discipline is to be organized along the lines of the free exchange of ideas, then persistent and strident (even violent) opposition cannot be tolerated since it implies that the exchange of ideas is not what such opponents are 'really' after.

Finally, the fact that neoclassicals treat their entry point as universal and transhistorical may make it easy for them to ignore schools of thought which historicize and, thus, particularize their concepts. Humanism and naturalism are equally influential in disarming potential combatants in the economics discipline. Hence, challengers to the neoclassical dominance should be advised that to accept the premises of the neoclassical entry point—to accept the eternality and universality of rational intentions and scarcity—will make it nearly impossible to articulate their alternative discourses.

#### KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS: ESSENTIALIZING THE STRUCTURES OF MASS PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Keynesian economics begins, of course, with the work of John Maynard Keynes, the British economist whose work in the 1920s and 30s on the causes and solutions to recessions in a capitalist economy disrupted the predominance of the neoclassical school in the economics discipline. Although there are many versions of Keynes's revolution, suffice it to say that in our view, Keynes's greatest challenge to the neoclassicals was in his rejection of the neoclassical entry point: the idea that individual preference was the active determining cause of all economic results. Keynes, however, did not avoid causal essentialism; rather, he substituted a different essence. In opposition to the neoclassical contention that, in a market economy, the unemployment of resources and economic stagnation could not be a long-term situation, Keynes argued that the 'imperfections' of the market which prohibited equilibrium at full employment were systematic and structural in nature and origin. Where the neoclassical models of labor, capital, and goods markets showed that if individuals are rational and free to make choices, then all markets will fluctuate in response to a



temporary 'disequilibrium' in order to reassert an equilibrium, once again, at full employment levels, Keynes, in contrast, argued that many of the aggregate categories of economic analysis, such as the demand for goods and the supply of labor, cannot be disaggregated entirely to their 'micro' roots. Instead, Keynes asserted the existence of certain structural totalities, primarily in the forms of mass psychology and social institutions, which determine for the most part the behaviors of economic agents and, thereby, create the 'distortions' of the normal market behavior which would be predicted by neoclassicals.

Keynes's entry point, then, involves a combination of mass psychology and social institutions. But, to understand them correctly, we must see them as structural totalities, not reducible to component parts but, instead, causally determining all other economic variables in a market economy. It must also be said that Keynes's structuralist entry point was articulated largely in reaction to what he considered to be a pervasive 'fact' of human existence: uncertainty. Much of Keynes's emphasis on the structures of mass psychology and social institutions can be traced to his belief (expressed most forcefully in Keynes 1937) that conventional and institutionally-determined rules of behavior are the prime determinants even of so-called rational economic behavior in a world where rational behavior is constrained severely by the inability either to foresee with certainty or, in some cases, to forecast statistically probable outcomes of key economic actions. It could even be said that uncertainty is the prior cause of Keynes's structural totalities. But since uncertainty is, of course, unknowable (at least to Keynes), then within the Keynesian framework, one can discuss causality meaningfully *only* by reference to the main 'real' manifestations of uncertainty's existence, the structures of mass psychology and social institutions.

Yet, Keynes's structuralism was not complete, and in one important area he retained a humanism more characteristic of neoclassical theory than of the rest of his own formulations. As we discuss below, his insistence on the essential decisionmaking of the entrepreneur in determining his/her portfolio remains wedded to humanism.

Keynes's structuralism can be seen in two areas. First, in his discussion of the determination of the level of employment, Keynes shows how the labor market can equilibrate supply and demand at less than full employment. At the equilibrium money wage rate, more workers will be willing to work than may be demanded at that rate. The reason for this 'involuntary unemployment' is that workers may not be willing to offer their labor below a certain level of the money wage. The reasons for this unwillingness—the key determinants for the supply of labor—could be custom and tradition, the existence of unions (institutions which arise to protect the collective interests of labor), or workers' collective perception that in the face of uncertainty and because they have 'money illusion,' they would prefer not to allow the

money wage to fall below some level. By not bargaining over the real wage, workers then exhibit what neoclassicals regard as 'irrational' expectations in the face of uncertain knowledge about wage and price changes. However, for Keynes, the lack of foresight of workers to perceive changes in their real wages when prices change (but their money wage doesn't) was a general and defensible characteristic of the mass psychology of workers—of the collective will represented, perhaps, by their trade unions—and is not reducible to each individual worker's preferences. Keynes also allowed that other 'rigidities' in the money wage could result from the action of oligopolistic firms. In each case—and primarily in reaction to the presumed 'fact' of uncertainty—the structure of mass consciousness or the existence of social, collective institutions and of the power these institutions wield in affecting market conditions determine the supply of labor and, thereby, make it possible for unemployment and recession to occur without any automatic tendency for self-correction.

Second, Keynes perceived the aggregate behaviors of consumers and savers to be determined by mass psychology as well. In positing the aggregate demand for consumer goods and services, Keynes argued that consumers allocate some customary proportion of their income on such expenditures. Keynes argued that the determination of the aggregate level of demand for final, consumer goods depended on what he called a given 'propensity to consume.' This propensity to consume is mostly 'exogenous' to the analysis and has its origin primarily in the general cultural and mass psychological forces—once again, the collective will—of a society. Turning to aggregate savings (which determines the supply of loanable funds), Keynes departed from the conventional neoclassical wisdom which held that savings was a function solely of the rate of interest. In so departing, Keynes showed that, like consumption, savings (indeed as the opposite side of consumption) was a function of the level of income. Like consumption, the level of aggregate savings was determined by a given 'propensity to save.' And, again, this propensity was a matter of mass psychology and social institutions and not reducible to the individual preferences of savers.

In several other areas, Keynes showed his own preference for aggregate, structural determinants in explaining economic activity. However, Keynes's structuralism halted in one key area, the determination of the level of investment. When discussing the investment choices facing the entrepreneur, Keynes resorted to a form of humanism by allowing the lonely entrepreneur to make a real choice based on his or her 'animal spirits.' Part of the reason for this departure can be traced to his (for many Keynesians, mostly inexplicable) different treatment of the effects of uncertainty on investment behavior as opposed to employment, consumption, and savings decisions. Though Keynes portrayed the regularity of aggregate decisions on consumption and savings as emerging from their

conventional (structural) determination, he believed that when it came to the decision to invest, the uncertainty and risk attached to this activity made its determination anything but conventional.<sup>15</sup> Instead, in the face of uncertainty, the entrepreneur is faced with real choice, one that in the last instance must reflect his/her preferences for one form of interest-bearing asset over another. We can say, then, that the entry point of mass psychology and social institutions is modified and even undermined by the introduction here of the neoclassical entry point of subjective preference.

In the 1950s and 60s, Keynesians were in the ascendance in the economics profession. Since that time, the different strands of Keynesianism have reacted in divergent ways to sharing the terrain with neoclassicals and others. Some, like Paul Samuelson, portray the differences and divisions among diverse theoretical approaches as simply 'historical' and, in the present, as minor disturbances for the grand modernist synthesis he and others had accomplished in bringing together and making consistent the central tenets of neoclassical 'micro' theory and of Keynesian 'macro' analysis. Samuelson and his 'bastard Keynesian' colleagues resist the complete collapse of Keynes's structuralist analysis into the humanism of the neoclassicals. But, at the same time, he characterizes the neoclassical and Keynesian schools as fundamentally compatible on the grounds that they represent two ways (micro and macro) of thinking about the same problems.

Samuelson, Robert Solow, James Tobin, and others reserved in the past their harshest words for neoclassicals (like Friedman and members of the 'Chicago School') who insisted on subjecting to severe criticism and even ridicule Keynes's consumption function, his analysis of the demand for money, his discussion of the fixed propensities to save and consume, and his theory of rigidities in wages and prices, and much else. Yet, for the most part, these Keynesians define the discipline in such a way as to include even these staunch enemies. In response to Marxists and others, however, Samuelson, et al. were (and are) not tolerant. This intolerance can be understood partly as the reaction to the Marxist view (in their reading) that Keynes did not go far enough in finding the structural determinants of economic behavior under capitalism. The 'bastard Keynesians' read Marx and Marxists as implying that the structure of capitalism is ultimately a class structure and that, therefore, private property, individuality, market exchange, and so forth can be reduced to effects of class position and class struggle (an implication to which their own political liberalism is in strong opposition).

Many Keynesians regard economics to be primarily (but not exclusively) a matter of testing empirically the models suggested by Keynes's theory of income creation. When neoclassicals produce testable models of structural determination, then their achievements can be considered to be in the 'core' of the discipline. But given the

neoclassical proclivity for abstract, deductive arguments, much of neoclassical thought was and is perceived by Keynesians as tangential to and even destructive of the empirical core. Some Keynesians argue that since neoclassicals insist on formulating models that cannot be tested—starting from subjective preferences which can't actually be measured or observed in advance, the variables specified by these models defy empirical observation and quantification—and gravitate toward the use of abstruse mathematical models, neoclassicals cannot contribute to building this core. In pursuing the elaboration of these models, neoclassical economics runs the risk of collapsing into pure metaphysics and ideology. In contrast, many Keynesians view their 'propensities,' and so on, as eminently calculable and, hence, capable of being measured and used to test the key Keynesian propositions. Here, the structuralism of Keynes joins forces with an empiricist epistemology to establish the legitimate content and bounds of the discipline.

Another school of Keynesians, unlike Samuelson and his colleagues, has eschewed entirely attempts to synthesize neoclassical and Keynesian propositions. This group comprised of the 'Cambridge (UK) School' (of Joan Robinson, Nicholas Kaldor, and others) and the Post Keynesians refuse to submerge the structuralist implications of Keynes's initial work. These Post-Keynesians, in fact, often turn to Marxists and radicals to add new structural determinants (such as class) to Keynes's original analysis. Further, they join some Marxists and radicals in seeing neoclassical theory as an apology for capitalism and, thus, would prefer to define the discipline so as not to include the dominant neoclassicals.

The Keynesian insight into the many structural obstacles to neoclassical equilibrium solutions has been developed further by some Keynesians who have sought to reconceive Keynes's work on the basis of 'disequilibrium.' This group sees the proper study of economics to focus on dynamic, disequilibrating processes and on conditions of imperfect knowledge and uncertainty in all aspects of economic behavior (including consumption). With the disequilibrium approach, we are far from the harmony and tendency toward stability of the neoclassical framework. Yet, interestingly, the Keynesian advocates of the disequilibrium approach have often embraced the humanism of Keynes's treatment of investment and have now extended it to other spheres. In this rather strange way, the humanist entry point of subjective preferences has been let back in so that, on these grounds, neoclassical and Keynesian approaches can coexist in constituting the main traditions of the discipline.

#### MARXIAN ECONOMICS: CLASS, ENTRY POINT, ESSENCE, AND ANTI-ESSENCE

We conclude our discussion of different schools and their entry point with a brief presentation of some variants of Marxian thought: One

distinguishing characteristic of current debates within Marxian thought is that essentialism (both causal and epistemological) itself is an object of dispute. In regard to causality, some variants of Marxian thought announce themselves as humanist, others proclaim the virtues of structuralism, while even others attempt combinations of the two. Most importantly, however, there is now a powerful variant of Marxian thought which explicitly rejects all forms of causal (and also epistemological) essentialism.

Common to many of these Marxian variants is the use of class as the entry point for social and economic theory. The concept of class is by no means defined uniformly, however, and the different definitions often contribute to or partly prevent the essentializing of class as an entry point. For example, some Marxists define class in terms of the ownership of private productive property. In this definition, the structure of power which allocates property rights unequally is held to be the essence of all other economic arrangements. It is also possible to define class in terms of power over people, creating a social differentiation between order-givers and order-takers, between oppressor and oppressed. In this view, power is often conceived as deriving from some innate desire of human beings to exercise authority over others. Thus, power stands as the root cause for all of the economic outcomes structured by class and class struggles.

The structuralism and humanism of these formulations may stand in opposition to a concept of class defined as the process in which what Marx called surplus labor is produced, appropriated, and distributed. However, the definition of class does not by itself dictate whether class will be treated as the fundamental truth of economic and social theory. Just as important is the notion of causality Marxists employ. One advantage Marxism may have in avoiding reductionist forms of argument is the commitment to a notion of dialectics. Though, once again, there are many versions of dialectics in Marxian theory, for us the key dimension of dialectics is the idea that no concept or event can ever be viewed simply as either cause or effect. Rather, the notion of dialectics implies for us the idea that all entities enter into the constitution of all other entities and, therefore, exist as simultaneously constituent causes and effects. Another way to put this involves using the term the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1970) and others borrowed from Freud: overdetermination. In our view, the multiple and contradictory interactions between social entities is one in which each entity serves as the partial condition for—it overdetermines—the existence and reproduction of another. But, at the same time, it too is 'overdetermined' by all the elements it partially constitutes.

This notion suggests that class or any other concept cannot designate an causal essence, an ultimately determinant cause for all other concepts and events, in the first, last, or any instance. In our view, Marx articulated such an 'overdetermined' notion of class as an entry point.

Class, the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor, is the concept through which Marx entered into his discussion of commodity production and circulation, the accumulation of capital, economic crisis, and much else about a capitalist economy in *Capital* (1977). But he avoided making class the essence which these aspects express or to which they are to be causally reduced. Marx's dialectical and class analyses of feudalism, capitalism, and other socioeconomic formations stand as strong attempts to avoid the forms of causal essentialism—the humanism and structuralism—of other economic and historical approaches.

We should note that some variants of Marxian theory do not use class as an entry point. But it is not necessarily the case that they avoid essentialism. For example, some Marxists prefer to see the structure and movement of a capitalist economy as stemming from the dynamic of capital accumulation.<sup>16</sup> This dynamic, for some, is believed to originate in innate human greed, while for others it is the product of the structure of the capitalist economy or of the accumulation process itself.

When Marxist economists embrace reductionist forms of argument and treat their entry point as an essence, then they share a common terrain with their neoclassical and Keynesian peers. To repeat just one such case, the analytical Marxists derive class from the subjective preferences of individuals. As a result, despite their identification with the Marxian tradition, when it come to defining economic analysis, they are prone to agree with neoclassicals and Keynesians that non-analytic Marxists are not 'doing' economics. As another example, Marxists who make capital accumulation the fundamental truth of economic theory often regard neoclassical humanists as exterior to the 'classical political economic' tradition of focusing on the structural determinants for the distribution of income and accumulation. Thus, these structuralist Marxists may view the economics discipline as a continuation of this tradition and, hence, may regard Keynesians, but not neoclassicals, as in the proper line of descent.<sup>17</sup>

In our view, as long as causal and epistemological essentialism prevail, Marxists and others will define competing views as potentially outside of their concept of the discipline. What the concept of overdetermination makes possible is a way of understanding the differences between schools of thought that avoids those attempts to hegemonize the discipline which follow from claims of having discovered absolute truth, the essence of economic activity, the correct way to theorize economic entities, and so on. The non-essentialist Marxism which we embrace denies the importance of establishing the shared content and discernible limits of the economics discipline. While this Marxism argues for the possibility of recognizing persistent differences between often incommensurable economic discourses, it

likewise entertains no need to eliminate these differences in the name of 'disciplinarity.'

Non-essentialist Marxism promotes the view that there is no 'core' of methods, concepts, truths, or objects of discourse which are shared by all of the economic schools (and their internal variants) we have discussed. In other words, there is no essence to the economics discipline; its unity is the projection of the self-consciousness of one or another school onto the entire field of discourse. This projection is designed to engulf or exclude others. Since non-essentialist Marxism refuses to recognize a center for economic discourse, it asserts instead the proliferation and continued controversy between all such schools. Abandoning the search for the essence of economic theory also leads to a deconstruction and reconstitution of the economics discipline, this time along the lines of accounting for difference rather than a hegemonic strategy of 'totalizing' the field. At present, we believe that Marxists working on developing the non-essentialist tradition are taking the lead in breaking down the exclusionary notions of the unified discipline which most neoclassicals and Keynesian economists (and some of our Marxian brothers and sisters) are still at great pains to retain.

#### NOTES

1. Our extremely brief and overly simplified descriptions of the works of Jameson, *et al.* should not obscure our acknowledgement that these works are more complicated and deserving of serious attention than we present here. Additionally, we note that serious points of contention exist between these authors. Also, we recognize that their respective ideas have developed and changed over time. For example, in our view, the Althusserian echoes of Eagleton in his *Criticism and Ideology* (1976) have been mostly foregone and replaced in his more recent works, such as *The Function of Criticism* (1984). Likewise, we acknowledge that our rendition of Marxian economics stresses common elements rather than differences. Readers should be aware, however, that we find severe splits between different schools of Marxian economic thought. Our own differences with the school of analytical Marxism, for example, are sharp and, in our view, concern precisely the question of whether or not we and they occupy the same discursive terrain of Marxism.
2. For several accounts of Marx's 'break' from Classical Political Economy, see Althusser and Balibar (1970), Tribe (1978), Wolff, Roberts and Callari (1982), and Resnick and Wolff (1987). For an extended discussion of the import of a 'discontinuist' approach to the history of economic thought, see Amariglio (1988).
3. For some of the key issues in the debates on Keynes's 'revolution' see Leijonhufvud (1966, 1976) and Blaug (1976).
4. For a more thorough discussion which develops more deeply the implications of the notion of 'entry points' in differentiating theories see both Wolff and Resnick (1987) and Resnick and Wolff (1987).
5. For an appraisal of the status of postmodernism within mainstream economic discourse, see Amariglio (1990).
6. See Blaug (1980), Caldwell (1982), and McCloskey (1985) for three different evaluations of the successes and failures of positivism in economics.
7. One original reconceptualization of the uses to which Marxists put the terms 'error' and 'deviation' is Althusser's introduction to Lecourt (1977).
8. For two related criticisms of analytical Marxism, see Ruccio (1988) and Amariglio, Callari and Cullenberg (1989).

9. To our knowledge, the term 'bastard Keynesian' is the scornful appellation that the English 'Cambridge School' of Joan Robinson, Nicholas Caldor and others gave to the American 'Cambridge School' of Paul Samuelson, Robert Solow, and others. The appellation 'bastard' refers to the English Keynesians' claim that the interpretation of Keynes perpetrated by Samuelson, *et al.* cannot claim its line of descent from Keynes; Keynes is not the father of this interpretation.
10. For the preceding argument, see Davidson (1981).
11. For an extended discussion of the differences between neoclassical and Marxian economics, see Wolff and Resnick (1987).
12. For some useful introductions to the 'new classical economics' see Klammer (1983), Willes (1981), and Froyen (1983).
13. See Shackle (1966) for one such example.
14. Despite its celebration of human agents—their intentions, rationality, resource endowments, and technical abilities as the basis for all supply and demand behavior—neoclassical theory has long recognized the need to specify a rule that transcends such agents and, in effect, governs their supply and demand behavior. Well known in this theory is the specification of a fictitious or invisible auctioneer who follows a predetermined rule that permits a market equilibrium to be achieved among the economy's individual agents of supply and demand. Use of such a discursive strategy displaces the need for any explanation of how individual agents react beyond maximizing behavior when the market is not in equilibrium. In the neoclassical model, the purpose of an imposed auctioneer and the rule is precisely to produce a market equilibrium out of a non-equilibrium situation. This device forces agents to conform to a specific economic result, namely equilibrium in markets, and a specific political consequence, namely a harmony between otherwise conflicting desires. The resulting dilemma posed for neoclassicals by this introduction of a structuralism into an otherwise thoroughgoing humanist approach is captured nicely by the lament of one of their leading practitioners: 'But the auctioneer's pricing rules are not derived from any consideration of the rational actions of agents on which the theory is supposed to rest. Thus the equilibrium notion becomes arbitrary and unfounded' (Hahn, 1989, p. 66).
15. Keynes (1937) is the most frequently cited source for this view.
16. For a good overview and critique of the essentialism of this group, see Norton (1986).
17. This is close to the argument of the late Marxist economist, Maurice Dobb (1973).

## REFERENCES

- Althusser, L. 1970. *For Marx*. Vintage, New York.
- Althusser, L. and E. Balibar. 1970. *Reading Capital*. Verso, London.
- Amariglio, J. 1987. 'Marxism Against Economic Science: Althusser's Legacy', in P. Zarembka (ed.), *Research in Political Economy*. Vol. 10, JAI Press, Greenwich, Conn.
- . 1988. 'The Body, Economic Discourse, and Power: An Economist's Introduction to Foucault', *History of Political Economy*. 20(4), pp. 583–613.
- . 1990. 'Economics as a Postmodern Discourse', in W. Samuels (ed.), *Economics as Discourse*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston.
- Amariglio, J., A. Callari, S. Cullenberg. 1989. 'Analytical Marxism: A Critical Overview', in *Review of Social Economy*. 47(4), pp. 415–32.
- Blaug, M. 1976. 'Kuhn versus Lakatos or Paradigms versus research programmes in the history of economics', in S. Latsis (ed.), *Method and Appraisal in Economics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- . 1980. *The Methodology of Economics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Caldwell, B. 1982. *Beyond Positivism*. George Allen & Unwin, London.
- Coddington, A. 1976. 'Keynesian Economics: The Search for First Principles', *Journal of Economic Literature*. December 14.
- Davidson, P. 1981. 'Post Keynesian Economics', in D. Bell and I. Kristol (eds.), *The Crisis in Economic Theory*. Basic Books, New York.



- Dobb, M. 1973. *Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Eagleton, T. 1976. *Criticism and Ideology*. Verso, London.
- . 1983. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- . 1984. *The Function of Criticism*. Verso, London.
- . 1986. *Against the Grain*. Verso, London.
- Eichner, A. (ed.) 1983. *Why Economics is Not Yet a Science*. M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York.
- Elster, J. 1985. *Making Sense of Marx*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Friedman, M. 1953. *Essays in Positive Economics*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Froyen, R. 1983. *Macroeconomics: Theories and Policies*. Macmillan, New York.
- Hahn, F. 1989. 'Auctioneer', in J. Eatwell, M. Milgate, and P. Newman (eds.), *The New Palgrave: General Equilibrium*. W. W. Norton, New York and London.
- Jameson, F. 1971. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- . 1981. *The Political Unconscious*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- . 1984. 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*. 146.
- Keynes, J. M. 1936. *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York.
- . 1937. 'The General Theory of Employment', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 51(2).
- Klamer, A. 1983. *Conversations with Economists*. Rowman & Allenheld, Totowa, NJ.
- Klamer, A., D. McCloskey, R. Solow (eds.). 1988. *The Consequences of Economic Rhetoric*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lecourt, D. 1977. *Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko*. New Left Books, London.
- Leijonhufvud, A. 1966. *On Keynesian Economics and the Economics of Keynes*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- . 1976. 'Schools, "revolutions" and research programmes in economic theory', in S. Latsis (ed.), *Method and Appraisal in Economics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lukács, G. 1964. *Studies in European Realism*. Grosset and Dunlap, New York.
- . 1971. *Realism in Our Time*. Harper and Row, New York.
- McCloskey, D. 1985. *The Rhetoric of Economics*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Macherey, P. 1978. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Marx, K. 1977. *Capital*. Vol. 1. Vintage, New York.
- Norton, B. 1986. 'Steindl, Levine, and the Inner Logic of Accumulation', *Social Concept*. 3 December.
- Pêcheux, M. 1982. *Language, Semantics and Ideology*. (trans. H. Nagpal). Macmillan, London.
- Resnick, S. and R. Wolff. 1987. *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Roemer, J. 1988. *Free to Lose*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Ruccio, D. 1988. 'The Merchant of Venice, or Marxism in the Mathematical Mode', *Rethinking Marxism*. 1(4).
- Samuelson, P. 1957. 'Wages and Interest: Marxian Economic Models', *American Economic Review*. 47(6).
- Samuelson, P. and W. Nordhaus. 1988. *Economics*. 13th edn. McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Shackle, G.L.S. 1966. *The Nature of Economic Thought*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Tribe, K. 1978. *Land, Labour, and Economic Discourse*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Willes, M. 1981. ' "Rational Expectations" as a Counterrevolution', in D. Bell and I. Kristol (eds.), *The Crisis in Economic Theory*. Basic Books, New York.
- Williams, R. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Wolff, R. and S. Resnick. 1987. *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Wolff, R., B. Roberts, A. Callari. 1982. 'Marx's (not Ricardo's) transformation problem: A radical reconstruction', *History of Political Economy*. 14(4).

**WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM**

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

**DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA**

## *Postmodernism, Postmarxism and the Question of Class*

Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1990, 207 pp.

### INTRODUCTION

Marxism has been the most important theory of the socialist movement for the last century-and-a-half. It has inspired and guided numerous struggles against inequality and exploitation throughout the world. But it has recently come under substantive criticism as unable to provide a strategic and theoretical guide to new contradictions and issues such as media and consumption as well as for the 'new' social movements struggling around issues of gender and sexuality, racial oppression, environmental degradation, and so on. Many of these have drawn on poststructuralism and postmodernism rather than marxism for inspiration and theoretical guidance. Indeed, postmodernism has come to refer to a new constellation of political issues in contrast with the traditional focus on the economy and state power on the one hand and prominence of the labour movement and the working-class as the agent of socialist transformation on the other.

The debates over modernity and postmodernity were initially formulated in post-world war two western Europe, particularly in France. The emergence of a current of philosophical thinking that came to be known as poststructuralism provided the theoretical underpinnings of the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment project of human emancipation linked to scientific progress. For many of these critics, most notably Foucault in *The Order of Things*,<sup>1</sup> marxism was deeply implicated in this latter project, thereby falling prey to similar criticisms as those applied to 'the project of modernity' itself. What was most objectionable for these writers in marxism was, firstly, a philosophy of history that purported to view social change as a

---

\* Working for his doctoral degree at the University of Columbia, USA.

series of stages in a pre-ordained logic and secondly, the affirmation of the Enlightenment belief in the growth of scientific knowledge and the increasing control of nature (the productive forces) as the basis of progress.

The fact that this new thinking took place in France was not inconsequential for the subsequent debate between poststructuralism and marxism. The powerful influence of the French Communist party on progressive intellectual activity in post-war France meant that any innovations within, or criticisms of marxist theory, would at best be received with great suspicion and at worst would have to operate outside the traditional forums of the left. This background provides some perspective on the theoretical and political issues at stake and why they took on some of the characteristics they did in the French context, especially after the events of 1968. Foucault's notion of power as extending beyond the state throughout society, Derrida's critique of a fixed centre from which objective knowledge could be obtained, and Lyotard's suggestion that the 'postmodern condition' is characterized by the 'suspicion of meta-narratives' or philosophies of history, all could be seen (and were seen) as attacks on the Marxist-Leninist themes of 'capturing' state power, the working-class as the subject-object of history and the notion of 'the class struggle as the motor of history'.<sup>2</sup>

Finding its initial reception in the 1960s in the areas of literary and art criticism—particularly in the United States—the themes and concerns have slowly found their way into political theory proper. Arguably the key text in this trajectory is the seminal work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.<sup>3</sup> A critical analysis of marxist theory and socialist politics, it is, in the words of the authors, a 'postmarxism without apologies'.

The overlap between what might be termed 'postmarxism' and postmodernism, though not complete, has been significant enough to cause alarm in marxist circles. In retrospect, the valiant attempt by Louis Althusser, the leading philosopher of the PCF, to synthesise these novel themes (such as Saussurian linguistics and Freudian psychoanalysis) with(in) marxism, led not to its rejuvenation but its demise. The thrust of postmodernism was towards a radical questioning, if not rejection, of the philosophical foundations of marxism, irrespective of the former's own political destination.

The responses to this widespread attack from writers committed to the marxist theoretical and political project have tended for the most part to be polemical denunciations: idealism, revisionism and so on. The most notable full-length critiques from an explicitly marxist perspective to date have emerged from Britain: Perry Anderson's *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London, 1983), Ellen Meiskins Wood's *The Retreat From Class* (London, 1986), and Norman Geras' review 'Postmarxism?' (*NLR*, 198), all three writers connected with

the journal *New Left Review*. Despite an erudite and provocative analysis, Anderson's critique, a series of three lectures, was too brief and historical to stem the postmarxist tide. Wood's and Geras' critiques, on the other hand, were marred both by their vituperative and ad hominem attacks on writers and positions whom even they conceded were 'well-intentioned', as well as their failure to take their challengers—theoretically and politically—seriously. While some have seen the Geras and Wood pieces as adequate responses to postmarxist 'excesses' and exposing the latter's vacuity, it is more plausible to suggest that, on the contrary, they have revealed a theoretical unsophistication, political flat-footedness and lack of comradely respect from the marxist camp that is, to say the least, disappointing.

So it is with interest that one awaits an informed and theoretically grounded response to these challenges from a marxist philosopher and activist. Callinicos' book should be seen in this context of a general attempt by marxist theorists to respond to these challenges. The following critical remarks are intended as an invitation to debate in ways that I think fruitful for both marxism and postmodernism. However, it should be made explicit at the start how I am approaching the book. I want to suggest that through a careful reading we can throw light on *marxism* (through the ways in which it responds to the theoretical and political challenges emerging from outside the traditional sources of the socialist movement) rather than on postmodernism per se.

#### THE BOOK'S PREMISE

It is clear from the title of the book that this is intended as a defence of marxism, putting a clear distance between marxism and other positions. Why would postmodernism trouble a marxist? Because, Callinicos argues, the trend towards 'postmarxism' is reinforced by the idea of a 'break' in contemporary society (from modernism or capitalism) to a new phase which 'requires a different kind of politics'. He flatly rejects all talk of a new stage of capitalism or type of society 'fundamentally different from the capitalist mode of production globally dominant for the past two centuries'. This conceptual tool has all the precision of a sledgehammer (lumping together conditions in 1800 and 1990 and between say, Zaire and Belgium as 'fundamentally the same'), but it provides marxism with an alternative diagnosis of society. Contrary to postmarxism, he seeks 'the reaffirmation of the revolutionary socialist tradition' of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci, which implies of course the reaffirmation of the centrality of the working-class as the universal subject and agent of human emancipation.

From this premise, that nothing has really changed, he is logically led to the question: why then all the talk of change? Since

postmodernism is not the way things really are, Callinicos must trace the reasons for the acceptance of these false theories. First, he must show that there has been no break between present forms of culture, politics and economy from a previous period (early part of this century). Second, he must link the theorists of postmodernism with the politically undesirable content of their theories. These two themes structure the entire book.

Callinicos defines postmodernism as consisting of three distinct 'cultural' trends: the break in artistic form from High Modernism to new postmodern art; the poststructuralist criticisms by Foucault, Derrida and others of the philosophical framework of the Enlightenment; and the alleged emergence of 'post-industrial' societies that invalidate theories such as marxism. This bringing together of different strands is a strength of the book: it attempts to construct a framework that makes sense of a large number of different theoretical and social developments. But it is also a weakness: the arguments are mostly derivative, patching together a wide number of sources to support the premise of a continuity. However, the book does throw light on the marxism from which the book is launched and how in the light of the problem of class politics, it responds to these challenges. Indeed, Callinicos (who both teaches philosophy and is a leading member of the British Socialist Workers Party, SWP) states that the book was written as an intervention in 'the more general debate over whether classical Marxism is still capable of providing theoretical and political guidance through contemporary society.'

#### DEFINING MARXISM

Since we immediately run into the problem of what marxism 'really' is, I want to propose the following as a working definition. Despite variations, all marxisms must share one fundamental claim: that the emancipatory political project (however defined) of contemporary society (however defined) is rooted in a single agent, the working-class (however defined). In other words, it privileges one political identity (the working-class), anchored in one type of activity, praxis or labour, as constituting the agent of socialist transformation and the addressee of its discourse. Marxism (a way to change the world; not only to understand it) stands or falls with the viability of this position. It is relative to this political-strategic understanding of marxism that this book should be evaluated.

#### MODERNIZATION, MODERNITY AND MARX

Chapters one and two discuss the nature of the avant-garde, the nature of artistic practice, introduce the problematic of modernity and modernization, and set out some marxist theories of these phenomena. The stress given to the debate within the arts is not put into context and it is hard to see the point of the discussion, except for the conclusion

that the modernism of the turn of the century exhibited both the ambiguity and heterogeneity claimed for postmodern art of the 1980s. But while claiming that this demonstrates a continuity in the aesthetic realm, it also poses a problem for later arguments—a point we will return to below.

The book then considers the various theories of the nature of modernity and historical change. But instead of a discussion of the challenges that marxism faces from these other positions, we get a juxtaposition: the traditional marxist stress on forces and relations of production, economic contradictions engendering the grave-diggers, etc. (backed up less by arguments than by long quotes from Marx), is set aside expositions of Weber, Parsons, Habermas, etc. and then it is claimed that the latter is superior to the former. No discussion of the precise, local pitfalls that marxism is faced with, just a dogmatic reassertion of superiority.

Quite liberal with invectives, Callinicos offers some banalities of his own: marxism is not teleological as the postmodern critics allege, because it does not claim that socialism is inevitable, since it allows for an alternative, in Rosa Luxemburg's famous phrase, barbarism! (p. 36) But this is nothing but the teleology of a theological kind: the future holds only heaven or hell. And he concludes that modernity for Marx is distinctive since economic crises give rise to the need to replace capitalism with communism to fulfil human needs made possible by the development of the productive forces. (p. 37) What is striking about these reaffirmations is the lack of anxiety over the multitude of problems that the theorists he considers have raised about just such formulations. The response is too abstract, too global. It is all or nothing. The above statement implies that the arguments over, say economic reductions, technological determinism ('productive forces as the motor of history'), etc. are either entirely immune from criticism or that Callinicos is ignoring them. So that when he invokes Frederic Jameson's theory of history as narrative with its inner meaning given by the 'political unconscious'—by which Jameson means the transhistorical class struggle—and the concept of commodity fetishism used by Adorno to decipher cultural forms, the stress is again on the *class* struggle as the transhistorical unifying element of history and society and *production* as the key to social processes.

The first two chapters setting out the problem of modernity and the nature of artistic production shed no light on the crucial problem facing marxism, provides no response to the critiques of marxism's theory of history, social evolution and political project, except the unabashed reiteration of traditional marxist positions.

#### POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Chapter 3 takes up the second theme of poststructuralism, the philosophical critique of Marx and modernism. It is disappointing.

Themes such as the plural, heterogenous nature of reality and subjectivity, the aesthetic, metaphoric nature of the social, are mentioned but not dealt with in a serious or adequate way. Callinicos proceeds by outlining three 'aporias' or problems relating to Reference, Resistance and the Subject. The first (incorrectly subtitled Rationality), is about the problem of the relationship between language and the objects designated by language. Accepting criticism of atomistic theories of language (in which words refer directly to objects), he argues that a non-referential theory of language embraced by poststructuralism is not the only alternative. Far too schematically to be convincing, he references some current debates in philosophy and leaves it at that. Even the arguments he does present do not appear to support his case.

The second problem of resistance is one of the few areas where the specific consequences of the poststructuralist critique for marxism is noticed. If power is heterogenous and diffused throughout society, then the marxist assumption of the economy (and 'its' subject, the working-class) as the centre and concentration of (the resistance to) power is invalid. But just when there seemed to be the makings of a fruitful discussion, the argument slips away and is treated firstly, under the more general problem of Nietzschean perspectivalism, which being unacceptable renders the former argument invalid, and secondly, as a result of the 'dashed revolutionary hopes of 1968 radicals, who falling in with the new social movements, rejected class politics for piecemeal change.' (p. 85) So it is difficult to avoid the impression that we are being presented with ultra-leftist denunciations to back up weak and schematic arguments. The third weakness that the poststructuralist faces is how to conceive of the subject or subjectivity. This is an incoherent discussion, raising the problem of constraints on individual action, but then asserting—by now predictably—that these constraints are primarily given by class relations. This chapter is the weakest and most inconclusive. Callinicos has written more extensively and subtly on these philosophical themes in the past but here seems to be content with more superficial criticisms and falling back on 'home truths'.

#### HABERMAS AND CRITICAL THEORY

Chapter four considers the thought of poststructuralism's most important critic, Jurgen Habermas. Habermas' work is without doubt the most significant contribution to contemporary social theory. He has developed a social theory that, while being inspired by marxian praxis philosophy, is considerably more sophisticated and attempts to fill in the gaps left by Marx's theory of modernity. Callinicos recognises the power of Habermas' critique of poststructuralism and leans heavily on it. But the paradox that he should confront—but sidesteps—is that the most cogent response to poststructuralism is in fundamental ways a departure from marxism.



## HABERMAS' SOCIAL THEORY

Both marxism and poststructuralism (as well as liberalism), Habermas argues, are tied to a one-sided conception of human action founded on the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy: either of the producing subject that confronts an external world of manipulatable objects and through praxis is oriented towards successful implementation of means; or of the reflecting subject, that forms opinions about external representations capable of being true or false. It is from this perspective that Marx, following Hegel, conceived of capitalism as a ruptured ethical totality of alienated human powers that had been objectified through praxis or labour, but that could not be returned to its source (the direct producers) because the circuit of externalisation and reappropriation of essential creative powers is interrupted by the capitalist who siphons off these objectifications in the form of surplus value. 'Under these premises, an accumulation process that has broken away from orientations to use value literally amounts to an illusion—the capitalist system is *nothing more* than the ghostly form of class relations that have become perversely anonymous and fetishized. . . Marx is convinced a priori that in capital he has before him *nothing more* than the mystified form of a class relation.'<sup>4</sup>

From this Marx projects a 'critical-revolutionary' perspective for action: 'If then, the ruptured ethical totality is thought of as alienated labour, and if the latter is supposed to overcome its alienation from itself, *then emancipatory praxis can proceed from labour itself*.'<sup>5</sup> But in several works that Callinicos cites, Habermas has criticised at length and in great detail the weaknesses of such a view. Marx did not see that the objective differentiation of social forms (e.g., the economy and administration) *also* represents a higher and more advantageous level of system complexity compared to traditional societies. Because of this totalisation, Marx fails to deliver on one of his central objectives: to view history as a contradictory, dialectical process, since he 'has no criteria to distinguish the destruction of traditional forms of life from the reification of post-traditional lifeworlds.'<sup>6</sup> The totality of the social cannot be grasped from a single source, for example, labour or the commodity, which is the origin of its reality and meaning. It is discontinuous and fractured in the sense that all social pathologies cannot be traced back without remainder to class processes. The crucial consequence for marxism, as a practical-political project, is that the agents that are constituted around class unspecific contradictions (race, gender, environment, peace, etc.) are themselves *class unspecific*. The working-class cannot therefore be the locus of the universal interest. In this sense—that of a unified subject of revolution or history—there is no universal project. (This is one of Lyotard's central points in *The Postmodern Condition*. Callinicos is not only dismissive in general of Lyotard, but chooses to ignore this issue since it challenges precisely

the marxist emphasis on the centrality of the working-class as the subject of anti-capitalist struggles and socialism.)

#### CRITIQUE

The consequences of Habermas' critique of poststructuralism and marxism are ignored by Callinicos. He is content to make some superficial remarks about Habermas' philosophy of language. He raises some interesting points about the proceduralism espoused by Habermas but not in any serious way. The rest of the chapter consists of patching together some criticisms of Habermas' social theory, slipping in marxist concepts as solutions to (real) problems in Habermas where other concepts might do, with repetitions of marxist views on the state, democracy, forces/relations of production, and so on, which are remarkable chiefly for their candour. Either he thinks there is nothing worth discussing and all that needs to be done is to repeat 'what Marx said' for their truth to be revealed, or he disconnects the work of those he is discussing in one paragraph from the positions he asserts in the next.

Other criticisms of Habermas are irritatingly muddle-headed. Callinicos claims that Habermas' 'work/interaction' model leaves out of account the concept of relations of production. But Habermas developed the model from the forces/relations of production: the relations of production embody those normative structures that connect individuals inter-subjectively, as distinct from the production-oriented, monological activity of subjects *vis-à-vis* an external nature. In fact, in earlier work, Callinicos has defended the priority of the relations over the forces of production against technological determinist models. Since Habermas argues for the primacy of normative structures over those of material reproduction for the same reasons, Callinicos' position is confusing and amounts to a dogmatic restating of marxist views.

#### POST-INDUSTRIALISM AND CULTURE

The final chapter takes up the more sociological arguments of the alleged 'post-industrial' nature of current western societies. Again, the object is to demonstrate that there has been no 'fundamental break in the capitalism that has been globally dominant for the past two decades', this time in the economic sphere. It is hard to follow the arguments either between or within the subsections. Covering too much ground in too short a space, the final result is a welter of confusing data on economic trends all wrapped around cursory discussions of cultural phenomena.

#### CULTURE

Instead of taking up the issue of social identity and difference and its relation to a socialist politics, Callinicos retorts that the stress on identity and culture is all well and good but all societies must

reproduce themselves materially—as if material impoverishment is the only or most important form of oppression. Countering Baudrillard's analysis of symbols and cultural forms such as advertising and media, Callinicos argues that (i) the increase in 'images' requires increased *material* production of 'things' (such as VCRs), (ii) people still have mundane needs such as food and shelter, therefore 'production is still the major determinant of our societies'. This is astonishing from someone who has discussed the most sophisticated critics of economic let alone physical/biological determinism. The need to keep the marxist line simply makes Callinicos lose sight of elementary problems that he himself has confronted in other contexts.

#### THE WORKING CLASS AND SOCIALISM

Throughout the book the implicit subtext is a political one: the working-class as a practical political agent still remains *the* theoretically and organisationally viable force for a progressive politics today. Against theorists such as Gorz he argues that the rise of employment in the service sector has been at the expense of agriculture and not manufacturing. On a global scale the absolute level of manufacturing employment has increased, thereby vastly expanding the industrial proletariat. Now, not only are absolute numbers inconsequential for strategic uses but two implicit assumptions underlie the whole argument. First, that the qualitative question of the relationship between the 'working-class' and socialism is unproblematic, the only problem being the quantitative one. And second, that the 'working-class' is defined as industrial manufacturing labour. At any rate he fails to address the crucial issue that *however* the class map is drawn, the relationship between the working-class (however defined) and socialism *is an entirely different question*. In fact, as far as the link between a sociological group and a political programme is concerned, the 'boundary problem' is a complete red herring.

Rather late in the book, the final section claims to look at the political consequences of the preceding discussion and poses the question with which I suggested the book should have explicitly begun but which implicitly structures the book: 'What political subject does the idea of a postmodern epoch help constitute?' (p. 162) Readers might expect a discussion of the nature of the new social movements, feminism, race, environment, community movements, and their relationship to traditional working-class politics, organisations, demands, etc. But we do not receive an answer or a discussion of the above question. Instead, we are told that although postmodernism might be seen as the cultural expression of the 'new middle class', this would not be accurate since this class 'is less a *coherent collectivity* than a heterogeneous collection of strata . . . disarticulated by varying

power-bases. . . ' The implication is of course that there are 'coherent collectivities' such as The Working Class, which is not divided by race, gender, geography, ethnicity, occupation, status, consumption sector and so on. On what bases is one group heterogenous and other unified? Why not extend the heterogeneity of social identity to all classes, groups or strata? Labelling some collectivities 'classes' and others 'strata' does not solve the problem.

#### NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

What does Callinicos have to say about issues of racial and gender oppression, two movements that have drawn heavily on postmodernism and poststructuralism and the other movements that have become more prominent in the last thirty years? Absolutely nothing, except that criticism that marxism marginalises gender relative to class is 'one of the silliest arguments' and that criticisms of the 'production paradigm' 'are hard to take seriously'. (p. 126) Feminism is not considered once at all. He refers to 'the antiwar movement, the black ghetto rising, and the student revolt' as a 'generalized upturn of class struggle'. (p. 167) He neither theorises the different political and social identities that both poststructuralism and Critical Theory attempt to do, nor does he think they are worth much discussion: they are subsumed under 'class struggles', the term 'generalised' vague enough to suggest a broadening and stretching of an albeit unscathed class subjectivity. He insists on the continuing relevance of the marxist stress on class struggle in the face of, for example, nuclear war and ecological disaster. But it is not the relevance of class struggle that is at stake. Rather, it is the centrality and primacy of that identity and struggle *vis-à-vis* all others which I have claimed is the core of marxism. Class struggle is one amongst many other struggles, the working-class one amongst many other identities that can (potentially) struggle for progressive change. And even if ecological problems can be traced to economic dynamics, its pathologies do not necessarily appear in the sphere where they originated—non-class collective identities can coalesce around these contradictions.

In this context, let us recall Callinicos' conclusion that modernism 'was characterised by its *ambiguity*, its capacity to express a variety of different political positions, from fascism . . . to marxism . . . as well as a flight *from* politics.' (p. 161) But why is this characteristic of discourses restricted to modernism, why could it not also apply to socialism or marxism? Furthermore, Callinicos does not theorise the nature of discourse that give them this polysemic, symbolic or over-determined character. If he had been more nimble, he could have seen that poststructuralism has much to offer in precisely this domain. Together with the heterogeneity of social identity, this admission of the (potential) plurality of meanings within a given discourse, would

lead to a rethinking *both* of the supposed unity of the working-class as political agent and the *necessary* (not inevitable mind) link between the working-class and socialism. This is the ground of poststructuralism's most provocative contributions but has passed this text by entirely. But this is not entirely fortuitous. To take that path would most likely lead to the 'postmarxist' terrain that Laclau and Mouffe have argued for in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. (In fact the absence of a discussion of this work—given Callinicos' intentions—is simply astonishing and in a sense already ensures that the book is something of a non-starter.)

Predictably, a properly marxist (in the sense defined at the beginning of this review) response, it falls back on two arguments. The first is back to economics and the dynamics of accumulation: this is not a post-industrial, post-fordist, or postmodern age, but a new regime of accumulation characterised as 'overconsumptionism'. This can explain the 'mood' of the 1980s since it involved a 'reorientation of consumption towards the new middle class. . .' (p. 164) (So it does have to do with the 'new middle class' after all!) And the second and most important, in fact the punch-line of the book, is that all this confusion over the basic truths of our world is due to the waning enthusiasm of middle-aged ex-revolutionaries, who, disappointed with the results of 1968, 'renounced marxism' and 'abandoned revolutionary socialism for social democracy' (p. 167) 'pledged to achieving partial reforms'. (p. 168)

#### CONCLUSION

Callinicos concludes that 'the prosperity of the western new middle class combined with the political disillusionment of many of its most articulate members—provides the context to the proliferating talk of postmodernism.' For those whom postmodernism and poststructuralism has provided the context—if not the panacea—for a renewed discussion of feminism, gender, race, third world and anti-colonial issues and its place in an emancipatory politics today, this is simply absurd.

The Subaltern Studies Group have used the writings of Foucault in particular to great effect, providing nuanced historical reinterpretations sensitive to the historically contingent formation of ideologies and identities. There is no space to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this theoretical current, related in particular to the uneasy tension between a type of Lukacsian marxism and the deconstruction of such a philosophy of history. But it is sufficient to note that postmodernism is not confined to the European and North American contexts and that its reception in post-colonial contexts should not be marred by an (reversed) ethno-centric bias.

I want to suggest that the implications of *Against Postmodernism* go beyond this single book: what it reveals is the inability of marxism to

come to terms with the organisational and strategic challenges posed by the expansion of radical democratic movements beyond the bounds of the working-class. After such an inadequate response to the issues, we can only interpret the last sentence of the book—"The project of "radicalized Enlightenment" first set out by Marx, for whom the contradictions of modernity could be resolved only by socialist revolution, still awaits realization"—as the rather unconvincing assertion of a far from healthy political-theoretic project. If this is indeed unconvincing I want to suggest at least two issues which are at stake in the postmodernism/marxism debate in the Indian context. First, whether marxism is the only or at least most valid theory for a renewed socialist and democratic agenda after the events and transformations in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries.<sup>7</sup> And second, whether the critical discussions over this matter will have to take place outside the traditional organisations of the 'left'. How these issues will play themselves out in the Indian and other post-colonial contexts is a crucial factor in the reorganisation of the left in the post-cold war period.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. New York, 1973; first published in 1966.
2. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York 1977; first published 1976; Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (1968), in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, 1978; Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis, 1984.
3. Verso, London, 1985; see also their reply to Norman Geras, 'Postmarxism Without Apologies', *NLR*, 166; and Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London, 1990.
4. Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, Beacon Press, Boston, 1987, p. 339.
5. Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, MIT, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 65.
6. Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 340.
7. I have attempted an initial exploration of this question in 'Marxism and the Crisis of Communist Ideology', *Economic and Political Weekly* (forthcoming).

## BOOK REVIEW

### *British Rule in Bengal*

P.J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead, Eastern India 1740–1828*, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. II. 2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

P.J. Marshall's book contains a comprehensive discussion of the major historical themes and debates surrounding the question of establishment of British rule in eastern India. A large part of the book focuses on the author's main query—how far were the socio-economic and political structures of Bengal transformed by the advent of the East India Company? Marshall argues that colonial rule was only part of a complex pattern of developments in eighteenth-century Bengal. 'British rule stimulated, modified or aborted existing patterns of change; it did not break long continuities and force India into wholly new directions.'

The first two chapters examine in some detail 'the setting for the empire' and 'late Mughal Bengal'. Beginning with a survey of the long-term ecological and socio-economic currents that were transforming Bengali society even before the advent of the East India Company, Marshall goes on to examine the political and social base of Nawabi rule to emphasise the superfluity of the changes brought by the advent of the new regime. The Company inherited an economy characterised by a highly stratified agrarian structure, a flourishing trade network, both internal and external, in the context of increasing commercialisation of agriculture and a dynamic society with a growing regional and cultural identity. What the new regime achieved was largely shaped by the past.

In chapter three, giving a lucid delineation of 'the crisis' of the period and the region, Marshall argues that the Company acquired power in Bengal by occupying the space created by the instability in the relationship between the Nawab and the powerful local officials including the zamindars, merchants and bankers. He argues that the supply of silver, shipping and colonial trade had made the Indian merchants dependent on the Company and its private traders, a

connection they were not ready to break. The severe strain on the fabric of acquiescence on which the Nawab's government rested, due to the Maratha depredations in the post-1740s, made political power necessary for the British as the merchants could no longer serve as their intermediaries. When Siraj-ud-Daulah attacked Calcutta the Company was compelled to retaliate because their trade and network of interests depended on the privileged position of Calcutta. It was the conflict at the Darbar and the great merchants' dependence on the Company that inevitably brought in the British. Their interests at this stage were conservative, merely a restoration of previous privilege and position and it was the course of political events and the need to defend their commercial position that made them interfere politically.

It is difficult to accept that the interests of the commercial and banking class in Bengal were intertwined with the fortunes of the European Companies. If anything it was the East India Company that depended both financially and politically on the Jagat Seth banking house. The relationship was not of dependency but of conflict and cooperation. Moreover, the English East India Company was not the predominant component in this banking business of the Seth who lent equally large loans to other Europeans. The disgruntled powerful elements in Siraj-ud-Daulah's court were merely using the English as mercenaries to acquire power with no plan of entertaining them in the institutional framework of the Nawab's regime. Again, there seems to be an underplaying in Marshall's analysis of the serious evil of duty, free private trade which was eroding the very economic stability of the Nawabi regime by the 1750s, combined with the arrogant refusal to comply with the Nawabi order to demolish fortification provoked Siraj's attack.

The last two chapters are concerned primarily with the East India Company's experiences and experimentations in post-Diwani Bengal. The Company's government, Marshall argues, aimed at commercial profit and military and political security. The Company thus bothered little about change or continuity as such, so long as their interests were not in danger. Many things continued from the old regime to the new one. Both regimes were aimed at political safety, at extracting revenue and using it for military purposes. The change was only in the administrative personnel, in the replacement of the 'untrustworthy' Indian officials in the higher bureaucratic structure, although in the lower rungs Indian intermediaries continued as before. Marshall, however, does not give due attention to an important dimension here. The change in the structure of political power inevitably drew from the very logic of the Company's rule, i.e. the promotion of commercial interests. What the conspirators of Plassey had failed to anticipate was how it would change the political balance in Bengal. While the level of business interplay between Indian merchants, the Company



and the political authority of the Nawab's regime was an interplay of competition, patronage and extortion, what was significant about the political power was that it played the role of a vigilant and interested political authority, providing them with basic security. Plassey brought about a dramatic change in the situation by ensuring the direct participation of state power in monopolising trade and appropriating control over manufacture and sale. Under the umbrella of the Company whose logic precipitated full-blown capitalism, private trade acquired unlimited proportions, serving as a catalyst to structural reorientation of the pattern of commodity and the financial flows in the second half of the eighteenth century. To secure its economic ends the Company not only dominated the market as the biggest single buyer and imposed restrictions on the freedom of the producers, but also devised machinery for the procurement of export goods in such a way as to subjugate or exclude Indian trading capital from spheres chosen by the Company.

The Company was acting not simply as a trading power. It is true that after Plassey the Company's tribute in the form of investment and its increased role stimulated demand for certain products such as opium, indigo, silk and salt. It is also rightly asserted that the establishment of the Company's rule did not directly affect internal trade at this stage and that it brought major changes in direction and composition of overseas trade, the objective of this being to re-export Asian commodities throughout the world rather than supply the British industries with raw material. But it needs also be emphasised that in the wake of the establishment of the new order the structure of internal trade got severely strained, illustrated, for instance, by the history of the cash crops. The shift from food crops to cash crops, in some cases at least, was a forced process as money was needed to meet the growing burden of revenue and rents in cash. On the basis of the political leverage available to them, the English were in a position to coerce the producers and suppliers into a position of relative disadvantage. The active protection given by the Company to the Agency Houses made private monopoly the rule, infringing on the freedom of producers to cultivate. The horrors of growing crops like indigo and the institutional set-up linked to it has been underrated by Marshall. Some crucial dimensions of the indigo rebellion thus remain unexplained.

In agrarian structure, once again, Marshall emphasises the theme of continuity. As under the Nawab's regime, the primary aim was the maximisation of revenue which the Company believed would only be done through an unequivocal recognition of the property rights of the zamindars. Hence the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Such a demand by zamindars for recognition of property rights, he points out, was present even in the Nawab's regime and the Company did not enforce assessments with any more rigour than their predecessors had done.

The social consequence of the Company's rule was not the forcing down of living standards by an increased aggregate demand but rather a redistribution of the burden. It was control that was redistributed among existing landed families rather than formation of new estates by outsiders. Control over the village still rested in the hands of the village elite. The jotedars, the main beneficiaries of the state by the Permanent Settlement, were the frugal and astute zamindars belonging to the lower rank of the zamindari bureaucracy and official bureaucracy, while the older owners were not reduced to wretched tenants-at-will. 'The great man of peasantry was beyond the reach of the Company's revenue activities and if the Company had certainly not done the ryots any good it may not have done them any harm either.' Still, the effects of the high pitch of revenue at least in the early years of the Company and the ruthless rigour in collection even during devastating natural calamities on a population prostrate with misery cannot be underestimated in a general survey of the Company's rule in Bengal. Moreover, the social impact of the Company's revenue settlements on the ryots must be judged in the context of other developments that were occurring simultaneously. Growth of a land market, demographic growth in relation to the available increase of land, the cultivation of certain crops, change in the unrelenting pressure of rent and the threat of eviction on the peasantry combined with innumerable illegal cesses imposed by various levels of revenue collections reduced the peasant to a state of abject misery.

Marshall argues that what destroyed some of the old zamindars was not the enormous and excessive revenue demand but rather the policy of the Company to share authority with them. It was only here, notes Marshall, that the Company's regime caused change in the structure of political power. The disbandment of the armed forces of the zamindars such as the *paiks* and the *ghatwali* guards marked major social dislocation leading to law and order problems. Marshall could have discussed here the role played by Anglo-Indian law which had in effect frozen previously flexible and changing rights and properties, generating tensions in the countryside. The superior legal power made available to the zamindar by the Permanent Settlement which gave them the legal means for intensive and systematic exploitation of the peasantry, reinforced by the developments leading to an increased demand for land among peasants, enabled the zamindars to exploit the peasantry without exercising the old kind of coercion as well as caution of the Nawab's regime. By introducing Anglo-Indian law in the sphere of relations between the zamindars and ryots, the Company no doubt affected their relations, as reflected in the innumerable appeals, petitions and clashes. Involvement in regulating the relations between the ryots and zamindars was perhaps unavoidable for an alien regime seeking to conciliate different sections of the populations in its attempt to placate opposition, secure consent

and legitimise its domination. An entirely new order took shape in rural Bengal as the older world of hereditary landholding rulers and their subjects was replaced by a new world of law courts and a nexus between landlords and police *darogas*.

If, on the one hand, political change in Bengal was not a unilinear force that swept away all vestiges of the older order, the apparent continuities in the agrarian structures and economic life, on the other, concealed significant processes of change. Marshall's book promises to provide a comprehensive survey of the processes of both change and continuities. One does, however, discern in his work a strain to underemphasise, if not undermine, the change which reads often just as a reiteration of some of the earlier known arguments, without furnishing any new evidence. This criticism, however, should not detract from the value of the book, which undoubtedly is one of the best and a most updated analyses of eighteenth century Bengal.

MITHI MUKHERJEE

Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Culture of Banaras*

Sandria B. Freitag (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community Performance and Environment, 1800-1980*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, 290 pp.

'Despite its long-lived centrality of place in Indian perception, Banaras has not figured prominently in accounts of modern Indian history.' (p. 203) This factor, along with Banaras' uniqueness as a distinct urban city initiated Sandria B. Freitag to study popular protest in Banaras as well as to come up with a collaborative work on Banaras. Hence *Culture and Power in Banaras* is a welcome collection. However much one may agree or disagree with Freitag on non-attention of scholars on Banaras (Bayly, Cohn and even Diana Eck's works would refute this point), one ought to appreciate her for coming up with an interesting approach. Weaving different facets of everyday life, an effort is made to formulate certain points on the culture of Banaras. This is done by ordering these activities of everyday life, performances and movements in Banaras in three different sections. The first section deals with performances in the city/village and thereby reveals the belief systems and world views of the society or public. The second section seems an extension of this cultural aspect, i.e. it elaborates on the localised constituents of identity, e.g., identities which developed because of neighbourhood or leisure activities or through work. The third section moves to broader concepts of culture which include environment, disease, etc.

The book starts with eighteenth-century 'political economy'—a phase of cultural transition when a new effort was being made to convert the city from a Mugalisised (sic) form to a Hindu (sic) one when the new patronage of the Marathas along with the local political power of the Raja of Banaras emerged. Freitag also focuses on the development of new forms of urbanisation in Banaras. Based on C. Bayly's research, she talks about new corporations which emerged during the period. Among the five major centres in U.P.—Lucknow,

Banaras, Allahabad, Agra and Kanpur — Banaras was the only place which did not emphasise the tradition of the Indo-Persian literary style and lacked the presence of an Indo-Persian literary elite. Instead, the collaboration of Maharajas, merchants and Gosains gave Banaras a very different urban style.

The articles selected are thematic and there is a running link between the different themes chosen. The first section concentrates on popular public activities. In Philip Lutgendorf's article on the recitation of the *Ramcharit Manas* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an effort has been made not only to trace the history of the recitation of *Ramcharit Manas* but also its changing patronage over time. At Udit Narain Singh's time (1796–1835) the court patronage to this religious-cum-public activity started drawing patronage from nobles and landlords. Around this time its recitation acquired a competitive form. The *Ramcharit Manas* acquired the status not merely of a sacred book but also of a cultural epic. Hundreds of its verses entered popular speech as aphorisms, its stanzas were set to seasonal melodies like *Kajli* and *Chaiti* and performed as urban and rural folksongs (p. 45).

The form of patronage and other technological developments like printing altered the structure of performances. Lutgendorf also goes into the details of the famous *katha vachacks* (epic expounders) and shows how, over the centuries, the attitude of these expounders also changed. Since performances were no longer maintained by an individual patron or community on a long-term basis they began to accept set fees for their performances. The cause for the change in patronage, according to Lutgendorf, was the economic and political development of the latter half of the nineteenth century which precipitated the decline of the rajas and zamindars and the rise of urban mercantile communities, such as the Marwaris. These 'new' men found themselves in possession of wealth but in need of status—a dilemma which they resolved in part through conspicuous patronage of religious tradition. Influence of the Hindi language movement and the Sanatan Dharam turned these *katha vachack* activities into a festival form.

This particular article succeeds in making a historical narrative of changes in a given religious-cum-public activity but does not bring out the values and belief systems it inculcated in the masses. The author's emphasis is on the cultural and political context of its patronage. But it certainly raises an important question in the mind of a reader—could not these activities be seen as a part of identity formation? And, how were these activities located in popular perception?

The second article by K. Hansen focuses on the popular voice through the tracing of folk theatre and Hindi drama. It reveals how the coming of British rule and its impact on the new elite of Banaras brought about the rejection of popular culture. Elaborating on the folk theatre

tradition known as *svang* she traces its history and its distinct style in Banaras. This distinctness she attributes to poetic metre, i.e. a complete line length would be either of *chumatras doha* or 28 (*chaubola*).

Hansen states that parallel to festivals like Holi, *svang* provided an arena for staging symbolic inversions of the power structure of the society at large. Virtually every text studied in the period reveals a significant element of status reversal—e.g. king becomes an ascetic (*Gopichand*), king becomes an untouchable (*Harishchandra*) and child becomes a preacher to adults (*Prahlad*). Unfortunately, this argument is not elaborated further and she switches over to an examination of the social origins of the audiences. 'In the nineteenth century, unlike in Parsi theatre, *svang* served the different levels of society and it would probably be fallacious to locate its audiences as composed entirely of lower castes and classes. Brahmins and high caste poets were active in writing *svang* text. But, in comparison to Parsi theatre and Bhartendu Harishchandra theatre, *svang* manifested an overwhelming popular character. It was available to labourers, artisans and peasants and was a part of their cultural universe.' (p. 74) But by 1883 this situation changed when Bhartendu Harishchandra emphasised theatre as a respectable pursuit of the educated elite, and theatre voiced in his time the refined task and reformist ideology of the elite. This in fact widened the gap between popular and elite culture.

Marcus' paper on the rise of the folk music genre of '*Biraha*' traces the changes in this form over a century from the 1880s to 1970. It highlights especially the shift from a rural to an urban environment. *Biraha* basically was an entertainment activity of the lower castes of the region and was performed at two levels—in the villages, at wedding ceremonies and in the city, at temple festivals. This genre evolved along with the *akharas* or *gharanas* and also developed the *guru-chela* relationship (p. 96).

Both Marcus and Hansen have been able to trace the historical development of these performances. However they have not been able to bring out how the audience or the public internalised the messages conveyed. The serious question which emerges here is not whether we can call these activities 'collective' or not but rather how the people perceived them and how these became a part of their world view.

The next section shifts to discourse processes of identity formation. According to Freitag the constituent elements of the process were a series of inter-related choices made by individuals, varying in terms of place of residence, means of livelihood, forms of leisure and participation in ceremonial ritual and other collective activities.

Diane M. Coccarri's paper brings out identity formation according to specific neighbourhoods based on Bir Babas or Guardian deities which are here seen as an expression of resident identity. These identities were seen as 'protectors' and was an expanding process which moved

from one caste to other lower castes. This expansion was not only caste-oriented but space-oriented too. From rural areas it expanded to the city and here Coccari highlights the interesting phenomenon of rural and urban affinities. A point which needs to be elaborated is the rural/urban interaction which shaped the process of urbanisation in Banaras.

Nita Kumar explores different manifestations of the identity of Julahas. Rather than conventional notions of religion, Kumar explores different forms of work and leisure activities to construct a complex picture of what it meant to be 'a Muslim weaver in the Hindu pilgrimage centre of Banaras'. Does this mean that they did not perceive themselves as Muslim? Or did religion cease to be an important element in the ideology of the masses? Kumar also emphasises that major festivals like Muharram and Bara Wafat did provide an explicit context for the assertion of a Muslim identity. She also makes another interesting point that all 'these geographical devices (i.e. scenes of weekly visits, seasonal *melas* and annual *Urs*) created a sense of a 'Muslim' history of Banaras, rendering the place no longer 'Hindu' or alien but open, friendly and benedictory (p.167) and, perhaps, herein lies, according to her, the strength of a Banarasi identity. She has brought out the overlapping factors of identity formation like work, pleasure, activity but how these new processes overshadowed the religious identity has not been brought out. Even the issue of *muhalla* identity needs to be explained before one talks of Banarasi identity.

After delineating the methodological approach to understand the culture of the people (?), the public performances and activities being utilised as a media of power and authority, the third section moves forward to discuss movements, the regional environment and factors such as disease. The shift here is also towards the impact of colonial rule which was lacking completely in the two previous sections. Christopher R. King's article relates to the Hindi movement in Banaras, and it traces, very interestingly, the colonial impact on the social and literary movement. Taking the conflict between Urdu and Hindi which developed in Banaras in the early twentieth century as an entry point, King tries to show the predominance of the new Hindi vernacular elite and the Urdu vernacular elite. The government's policies created new situations where language too became a source of identity formation. British officials formulated language policies with massive contradictions, which aggravated the conflict and also created enough room for the vernacular elite to manoeuvre things.

The most interesting paper in this section is that of Freitag herself. Taking a period of almost a century Freitag tries to create a new narrative of Banaras' social history at two levels. The first is state and community relationship, i.e. the Rajas' interaction and patronage with the cultural domain of their subjects. Secondly, through forms of

protests and movements she shows the changes in people's behavioural mode. Making a study of both 1810 and 1893 Freitag tries to bring out the difference in the form of movements. According to her, by 1893 collective movement continued along traditional style protest action and western style argumentation.

Varady has tried to explain Banaras and its physical surrounding not exclusively at the mythological level but more at a physical level. Instead of highlighting only the perceived notion of Banaras as a religious city or as the centre of the world, he explains its economic and physical location which had crucial implications in the development of Banaras, as it did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and highlights the role of the colonial state through its network of railroads in degrading the environment.

Arnold's article in relation to ecology and the cosmology of disease in Banaras tries to show the cultural change which British rule brought about. More specifically, it highlights the underlying colonial attitudes and pre-occupations and how political and cultural concerns of the colonial rulers were means of control in the urban setting.

All these varied articles leave the reader with thought-provoking ideas. However, where the book fails is in its silence regarding answers to certain questions which it raises. Freitag, in her introduction to the different sections, has tried to tie certain elements as coherent wholes but the articles fail to project such a picture. Rather, certain crucial formulations remain largely unexplored—e.g. the identification of Banaras as a 'Hindu city' and its emergence as a centre of Hindu culture in the nineteenth century. The collection is equally silent on the question of women in the culture of Banaras. Moreover, the whole question of dominant or dominated cultures remains ambiguous.

KANTI ARORA

Department of History

Maitreyi College, Delhi University



## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Political Economy of Indian Sugar*

Sanjaya Baru, *The Political Economy of Indian Sugar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 225 pp., Rs. 150.

While India is the 'ancient hearth of sugar making', crystalline white sugar was unknown to India till the end of the nineteenth century. In early times '*gur*' or some variant of it was used as a sweetener. It was to meet the demand of the profitable European market for white sugar that the East India Company encouraged *gur* refining in the last decade of the eighteenth century. This refined sugar was wholly produced for export but the Indian industry could not compete with sugar produced in the West Indies, because of the low production costs of the latter, based as it was on slave labour, and its better quality.

When sugar began to be produced directly from cane, the *gur* refining industry declined and although a home market for white sugar had started developing, it was flooded by cheaply produced Java sugar. British capital in India began to take interest in the sugar industry, when indigo production was unable to withstand competition from cheaply produced dyes, a by-product of the chemical industry. However, in the matter of cane supply British capital faced some disadvantages as compared to Indian big business, who could utilise the agency of local dominant landlords and moneylenders, who in turn could easily dictate terms to the pauperised and indebted peasantry to force them to part with their cane. But growth was very slow for both British and Indian capitalists as imported Java sugar was much cheaper. Attempts to make Indian sugar competitive by constantly raising the import duty also failed.

Java at that time was a Dutch colony and Britain produced neither sugarcane nor sugar. So the growth of the Indian sugar industry did not come in conflict with British industrialists who were only interested in knocking out a rival imperialist competitor from the Indian market.

In India there was a wave of anti-imperialist struggles against the British in the twenties and thirties, as reflected in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements. The pauperised and

indebted Indian peasantry was reeling under the impact of a worldwide depression in the late twenties and thirties which had brought agricultural prices crashing down, and peasant discontent was bursting out in the form of peasant struggles as well as thousands of peasants joining the jail-goers in the national movement.

It was in this situation that protection was granted to the fledgling Indian sugar industry, a substantial portion of which was under British capital. The clear purpose was to shut out sugar imports, while one of the declared intentions was to give some relief to the discontented peasantry, to prevent it from joining the freedom struggle.

Protection helped the sugar industry to grow at a breathtaking speed. The number of sugar mills grew from 31 in 1931-32 to 139 in 1936-37. The mill-owners were allowed to raise prices to any level they liked and they earned huge profits in a totally protected market with imports shut out by a sliding scale of protective duty. It will be no exaggeration to say that it is actually the common consumer of India who is the real owner of this industry; it was financed by him by paying the exorbitant prices of sugar at a time when prices of all other commodities were declining. The state helped this expansion by expanding irrigation which helped the industry to spread out to western U.P., Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra and to the southern states of Andhra and Tamilnadu. The Imperial Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) spent at least one-fourth of its allocations on sugar research while additional funds for the same were provided from the Sugar Excise Fund, created by a special excise duty on sugar at the expense of the consumer.

In a hurry to capture the largest share of the protected Indian market, the Indian industry did not bother about quality and purchased outdated and even second-hand machinery from firms of low repute. Even in later years, they did not spend the enormous profits that accrued to them from sale of sugar at arbitrarily fixed high prices, for modernisation and rehabilitation of these junk plants and chose instead to divert them for building industrial empires.

When Congress ministries came to power in U.P. and Bihar provinces, where the bulk of the sugar industry was concentrated, the big business houses of Birla, Sriram, Narang, Walchand, Hirachand, Dalmia, Sawhney, etc. had no difficulty in securing the patronage of these ministries who hastened to grant recognition to the notorious cartel, the Indian Sugar Syndicate (ISS), formed in 1937. No mill could get a crushing license without being a member of the ISS and the ISS imposed a fine of Rs. 5 per md. if any member dared to sell sugar at prices below those fixed by ISS.

The rapid expansion of the sugar industry and rising prices resulted in an 'over production' crisis in 1936-37 and the phenomenon of 'over crowding' of mills. A look at the production and consumption curves since 1931-32 will show two parallel zigzags. Whenever production

surpassed estimated consumption the rising curve got converted into a declining one and after a trough the curve begins to rise to a new peak. There is a 3-5-year cycle. When production reaches a peak prices tend to decline and mill-owners begin to cry 'wolf' and ask the Government to help them out of the 'crisis'. The Government rushes to their help, showers bonanzas, which apparently never satisfy them, and crossing the trough, the curve begins to rise again and as soon as it reaches a new peak the game begins again. In 1983-84 and 1988-89 we had two such troughs when prices rose on the eve of elections and to 'save' the people Government had to offer concessions—raising levy sugar prices from Rs. 2.85 per kg to Rs. 5.25, lowering levy sugar ration from 65 to 40 per cent, doubling controlled price of molasses along with allowing a storage charge, and so on. So these cycles are the product of the greed for profits of an industry which has always grown under Government patronage both in colonial times and after Independence.

The story of the growth and development of this industry has been rightly called 'The Political Economy of Indian Sugar' by Sanjaya Baru, who is perfectly justified in saying that the 'sugar economy was not simply a matter of economic administration but . . . politics was central to it'; and that, 'Quite clearly, economics, technology and politics are all closely intertwined in the sugar economy.' He has also pressed into service the historical evolution of a problem.

Sanjaya Baru presents to all those who are interested, the problems faced by this extremely controversial industry, and everyone, from whatever point of view he or she looks at these problems, will find the book immensely useful and informative. Such an approach is a must because the sugar economy, in the words of the author, is a 'microcosm of the Indian economy', with many conflicting interests involved in it, so that the related problems are rendered even more complex.

#### LINKING SUGAR CANE PRICE WITH SUGAR

Sugar cane production increased by nearly 60 per cent from 1930-31 to 1931-32 (two years)—from 35.7 million tonnes to 57.1 million tonnes—and as has been happening since then, whenever there is a bumper crop the growers are punished by a fall in the prices of cane, which offsets any gain that may accrue to them for raising production. But it is these low prices that were fixed for the first time as the minimum price of cane by the U.P. Government, which also asked mill-owners to put up on their notice-boards that the price must constitute 66 per cent of the sugar price. The Government suggested a formula for linking cane price with sugar price which lowered the ratio to 50 per cent.

It should be noted that neither the Government nor the industry ever bothered to assess the cost of cultivation of cane. Mill-owners fixed the price of sugar and supplied information to the Government regarding their manufacturing costs, which was accepted at face value, without any enquiry. Cane price was supposed to be what remained of sugar

prices after deducting the manufacturing of conversion cost and a reasonable profit, adjusted for each mill according to a form with the duration of crushing season and percentage recovery of sugar from cane as variables.

It is not possible, due to shortage of space, to tell the morbid story of the hunt for a suitable formula which would satisfy both mill-owners and growers. The Government entrusted the job to experts and the mill-owners promptly raised objections to the formula recommended. Committees of experts were asked to look into the matter but mill-owners were never satisfied and the game went on with each subsequent formula being more favourable to mill-owners at the cost of growers. Suffice it to say that the share of cane growers in sugar prices, which was between 66 to 70 per cent in the beginning, constantly declined and now it is less than 40 per cent. This, despite the fact that the average size of a plant went up from 481 TCD in 1933-34 to 2036 TCD in 1989-90, and that the average duration of the season went up in the same period from 138 to 158 days, in some years even 170 days (figures are from the IISMA journal, *Indian Sugar*, January 1991 issue), and plants today are certainly more efficient with cane quality vastly improved.

The Statutory Minimum Prices (SMP) that are being announced by the Central Government have no relation to reality. In some northern states much higher prices, called State Advised Prices (SAP) have to be announced with the agreement of sugar mills, and in Maharashtra cane growers get much higher prices under a formula for paying additional cane prices at the end of the season.

This is not to suggest that cane prices do not cover the costs of cane production which are quite different in different states. What the cane growers are demanding is a due share in the profits that the mill-owners earn, particularly in the off-season rise in prices. In 1989 sugar prices doubled by September end as compared to June, when most of the mills stopped crushing. The Congress-I Government of that time first allowed sugar prices to steeply rise and when elections were going to be announced in October, they could only make mill-owners agree to a voluntary price control pegging sugar prices at the high level reached in September. The cane growers could get no share of this price rise and mill-owners pocketed all the extra profits, robbing the consumers. Whenever under pressure from the movement of cane-growers, cane prices were increased, the Government more than compensated the mill-owners by raising sugar prices. So the super profits of mill-owners were never touched and whatever was given to the growers, was taken out of the pockets of consumers with a premium—a policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

#### CONTROL, DECONTROL, PARTIAL DECONTROL

Sugar is the most regulated industry. Every mill has a reserved zone; there are regulations to control supply of cane from these zones to the

mills; the stocks of sugar cannot be sold at will by mill-owners and they are released under the authority of the Government month after month, so that sugar produced in the crushing season is evenly distributed in the off-season too.

Except for short periods of decontrol, the entire period from 1939 onwards is one of full control or partial decontrol. Why did controls become necessary? Because the Government policy had to reconcile conflicting interests—that of the consumers, the cane-growers, the mill-owners (who include almost all the big business houses and some regional entrepreneurs) and the landlord-cum-industrialists who control the cooperative sector (which comprises more than half the mills in the country).

When there is no control the mill-owners function as a cartel in relation to the Government, demanding concessions, and the sugar lobby controlling the cooperative sugar mills joins them—except when the controversy is about giving preference to the cooperative sector in granting licenses or when related problems come up. In periods of control, the Government plays the role of a cartel on behalf of the mill-owners, according to Sanjaya Baru. With the landlord lobby leading the agitation of cane growers and the Government amenable to political pressures in a parliamentary set-up, with all the tightrope walking the Government does, neither does the production cycle get flattened nor the price fluctuations evened out. But one cannot agree with Sanjaya Baru when he appears to be recommending removal of controls and utilisation of buffer stocks to do the balancing trick. Every time the decontrol has been tried, say by the Janata Party Government in 1978-79, it has ended in disaster, according to Sanjaya Baru himself.

There was a time when the cane growers' movement loudly demanded nationalisation of the sugar industry. But as Sanjaya Baru points out, referring to some of the most well-known peasant leaders, they were not ideologically committed to the demand and their actual commitment was to secure control over the industry on behalf of the landlords, who happened to articulate the demand of the cane-growers.

It is not possible to refer to all the points raised by Sanjaya Baru; he has left almost no important question related to the sugar economy untouched. One may or may not agree with everything he says, but there can be no two opinions about the merit of the book which makes use of all the important reports and studies related to the subject and presents a fascinating story of the growth of this important industry in a very succinct and understandable manner. It is indeed a useful book to anybody who has some knowledge and interest in the sugar economy.

P.K. TANDON  
All India Kisan Sabha

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Historian and Story-teller*

James Kerr, *Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 151 pp., £ 19.50 (HB).

Traditionally, history has been studied as a privileged representation of the 'actual past', while fiction has been placed in opposition to it as an imaginative and therefore essentially inferior rendering of the past. However, this conception of history and fiction as two entirely disparate modes of narrative has been challenged by historians and writers in recent years. Hayden White's description of historiography as a literary activity of story-making is representative of such an attempt to re-define the historian's task. James Kerr's Scott is a combination of historian and story-teller, of 'the romancer who forged illusions of the past from an admixture of literary form and historical record and the historian who used the logics of literary form as instruments for understanding the past.'

Kerr's reading of Scott's historical novels is an attempt to examine the many ways in which he played history and fiction off against one another not only as 'artifice' and 'reality' but as 'codified forms of written discourse.' He emphasises the fact that Scott's readers and critics have often missed the cues available in his novels regarding the artificial nature of his work. On the contrary, Lukacs' description of Scott as the instigating genius of historical realism has primarily guided the direction of Scott-criticism. Kerr moves away from this position to argue that Scott's novels are not so much a representation of history as an evasion of it, 'an attempt to create a safe zone of language in which the forces of the real can be contained and managed.' Especially in his depiction of the volatile relationship between the English and the Scottish people, Scott appears to be re-writing the given past, translating historical reality into extremely plausible literary fiction.

In the first chapter, titled 'The historical novel and the production of the past', Kerr briefly outlines the fictional strategies of historical

employment adopted by Scott and traces the 'model tensions' in Scott's novels to a conflicting sense of his own historical position. As a member of the professional middle class, he had to buy his entry into the world of the elite landed gentry. The dream of landed establishment took shape in the sprawling Abbotsford estate, which, as Kerr puts it, 'reflects his desire for social mobility as well as a longing for the restoration of the ancient landed establishment, and with it, the social relations of an older and better world.' Relating the details of Scott's personal life to his novels, Kerr argues that the larger structural ambiguities of Scott's social position is visible both in the characterological organisation of the novels and in the mixed sympathies of the major protagonists. Both *Waverly* and *Ravenswood* may be seen as figures of reconciliation who represent a resolution of such social conflict as is engendered by Scott's own social position.

The writer then moves on to a detailed analysis of selected novels in terms of their historical employment. Scott employed the Romance as an eminently useful literary convention that, while incapable of providing a true description of reality, could yet be used to present his own version of history. In chapters 2-4, Kerr traces the manner in which the Romance was shaped to suit the theme and characters created by Scott, from *Waverly* to *Redgauntlet*, touching on *Old Mortality*, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *The Bride of Lamermoor* in considerable detail. The dualistic vision of history that emerges in *Waverly* in which Romance becomes an instrument of wish-fulfillment, is the central force of all of Scott's historical fiction, for they are all essentially Scott's 'own day-dream of history'. *The Heart of Midlothian* is in essence a 'romance of national regeneration' that attempts to present a harmonious and unified, therefore essentially a historic vision of the world of British politics. Jeanie Deans' journey may be seen as an effort to repudiate the decadence depicted in the early chapters and to reform the corrupt order which pardoned Porteous and condemned Effie. Her appeal to the Queen becomes not only a cry for justice for the lower classes but an effort to recall Effie into the shared circle of the family that represents peace and virtue in a morally bankrupt world.

*The Bride of Lamermoor* with its disturbingly pessimistic view of history attempts a demystification of the supernatural even as it presents such thematic problems as the traumatic relationship between the past and the present, the decline of feudal values and the inadequacy of the Romance as a way of perceiving reality. The final chapter of *Fiction Against History* focuses on *Red-Gauntlet* as meta-fiction, as a commentary on the historical romance that takes the form of deceptively casual remarks within the narrative on the power and limitations of fiction as a means of grasping historical movements. The explanation offered by the narrator for a shift in technique mid-way through the narrative from the epistolary method to a third-person

account is one instance of the self-referentiality of the text. *Redgauntlet* is in fact composed as a piece of self-reflexive romance about writing history.

*Fiction Against History* takes the form of a response to earlier critical responses to Scott. In the process, the author's extensive reading and his constant engagement with the body of critical literature around Scott's fiction becomes evident. Indeed, the exhaustive end-notes to the book form an excellent annotated bibliography of sorts that would interest any student of historical fiction. However, one wishes that the author had included more of Scott's historical fiction in his study. A consideration of Historical Romances like *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*, to mention but two, would have created the space for a more detailed study of the Romance as an important mode of Scott's historical fictional narrative.

In historicizing the fiction of Scott, Kerr seems to attribute to him a great deal of conscious motivation in his manner of recreating the past. At the same time, certain other aspects, such as the nature of Scott's reading public are not sufficiently highlighted. Barring these few reservations, there is no doubt that this slim and handsomely bound volume of criticism will prove to be of invaluable assistance to readers and students of Scott.

V.K. KARTHIKA  
Research Scholar, Dept. of English  
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Uneven Development Under Capitalism*

Pat Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, xiii + 277 pp., £ 30.00 (HB).

Recent studies on the industrial revolution in Britain have emphasised gradualism and continuity but the concern has chiefly centred around aggregate or national trends. The present volume attempts to understand the industrial revolution primarily with a regional perspective, with a focus on the transitional phase when industrial regions were relatively free of metropolitan influence. It discusses four integrated themes; firstly, economic and institutional environment in the pre-factory industry; secondly, organisation and nature of industrial activity; thirdly, interplay of demographic, economic and labour factors within a region, and fourthly, the dynamism of early manufacturing regions.

The macro-economic approach to the history of industrial revolution exemplified by the modernisation theory assumes that the 'traditional' sector was just catching up with the vanguard factory but initially only small segments of the advanced sectors underwent 'modernisation', while 'traditional' sectors contained significant cumulative innovations by use of flexible technologies and constant adaptation. They were sometimes complementary to, and sometimes competitive with the factory sectors. Perhaps it would be better to abandon the terms 'modern' and 'traditional' entirely. Technological progress was not growth and rapid growth did not everywhere imply the revolutionising of production functions. Further, changing social relations of production were not always and everywhere a function of changing forces of production spawned by new technologies. Growth was an uneven process and it took very different qualitative forms both within and between sectors and regions.

With the growing industrialism from the late eighteenth century regional characteristics were overlain with increased commerce and manufacturing. Industrialisation accentuated inter-regional differences

by making them functionally distinct and specialised. The issues of national political reform were identified with particular regions, factory reform with Yorkshire, the anti-poor law campaign with Lancashire, currency reform with Birmingham. These regional differences entered people's consciousness. The state after 1815 began to foster identification with local customs and regional traditions as a means of combating the possibilities of nation-wide opposition. Hence, region should not be treated as a static and pre-given category but as a historically evolved one.

John K. Walton demonstrates with the Lancashire experience that the 'proto-industrial' phase was not only a dead end in many periods and places, it was also not the only possible transitional route to an 'industrial' economy. The transition was a complex and protracted process, but cumulatively it involved major shifts in the location of industry, in the nature of entrepreneurship, the composition of capital, and the age or sex structure and work experience of the labour force. Pat Hudson concentrates on network of credit and capital supply which were important in cementing diverse and dispersed manufacturing localities into a more integrated region in West Riding of Yorkshire. During the late eighteenth century, occupational endogamy prevailed and trading families were closely related through descent, marriage and work-cooperation. Links created in this way facilitated the flow of funds. From 1830 onward, the emergence of jointstock banks endorsed the regional nature of capital market. In the 1830-40s curtailment of open or internal credit was eased by expansion of external credit of banks. Bank overdrafts enabled firms to buy raw materials for cash at auctions or on very short credit thus taking advantage of periods of low prices, thereby putting the small artisans at a disadvantage. The directors lists of Yorkshire banks for the 1830-40s show the dominance of medium and large-scale industrialists on the boards. The shift in the credit-matrix began to seriously undermine the position of artisans.

The process of industrialisation in the West Midlands was an outcome of continuous interplay of innovation and continuity, and of diverse responses to pressure and to opportunity. According to M.B. Rowlands, it was a long process extending from 1560 to 1830, rather than a series of discrete economic stages. Work practices, commercial organisation and the structure of society in both town and village showed a remarkable continuity in their nature from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This continuity was a part of the long established agrarian regimes in which tradition and innovation were effectively and successfully combined. The persistence of traditional patterns of production, industrial organisation, techniques and process did not signify inertia, but there were continuous adaptations and extension of existing methods.

J.D. Marshall has analysed industrial transition in Cumbria between 1300 to 1914 in three successive stages. Each stage exhibited a

rich and contradictory mix of pre-industrial, proto-industrial and industrialised characteristics, and each had elements of dynamism as well as elements of stability within it. Even during the period of 'maturity' of industrialisation (1790-1914) associated with the so-called revolutions in factory production in coal, iron and steel, substantial de-industrialisation occurred in the twentieth century. The case study of Weald for the period 1600 to 1850 by Brian Short provides a clear example of the failed transition from proto-industrialisation to full industrialisation and also where the place of industry was not taken up by commercial agriculture. Under intense competition from international and national markets, Weald was converted from a prominent producer of glass and iron into a 'withered enclave'. The industrial revolution in the west of England shows marked contrasts of fortune; rapid growth and advance in the West Riding woollen and textile industries, rapid relative decline in the west of England during the eighteenth century. The decline in the west of England has been attributed to its failure to adapt to new technology, differences of product and marketing practices; but Adrian J. Randall stresses workers' resistance to machinery as another important factor in this process. Such resistance was encountered in both regions, but surprisingly resistance did not prove an obstacle to advance in West Riding.

Ireland, Scotland and Wales are believed to have similar economic histories which implies domination from the centre (England) resulting in the relative underdevelopment of the periphery (Celtic regions) and persistence of its cultural distinctiveness. Neil Evans points out the analogy is not true because the lack of diversification in South Wales is the product of a particular pattern of development. Persistent local capital shortages and dependence on 'imports' of capital were the key features which the iron industry failed to overcome because of its vertically integrated structure. Coal mining became dominant when key innovations had already been made elsewhere. The pattern of the north-east's growth was different; its pioneering role in coal production gave it an important place in the development of engineering and shipbuilding. In 1914, it was much less dependent upon coal than South Wales was. Ian D. Whyte discusses specificities governing the process of proto-industrialisation in Scotland. The strong trading monopolies which the ancient royal burghs retained until the late seventeenth century enabled them to exert powerful control over industrial production in their rural hinterlands. The agrarian structure of Lowland Scotland was one of the most important determinants in the distribution and character of rural industrial production, especially its dependence till the late eighteenth century on a class of small holding cottars with only limited access to land who were trying to diversify their activities into industrial work to increase their incomes. Leslie A. Clarkson

focuses on the environment and dynamic of the pre-factory linen industry in Northern Ireland during the eighteenth century, rooted in the small farms and cottages of rural Ulster. The earlier crafts could not become pre-factory precursors of the industrial base; on the contrary, they declined in the face of competition from other parts of the U.K., and faced de-industrialisation during the late nineteenth century.

This volume, though based mainly on secondary sources, provides an illuminating comparative perspective regarding the regional peculiarities of the emerging first industrial nation. But such a perspective needs to be integrated with national and international analysis, otherwise one may simply see the trees and miss the forest.

BRAHMA NAND

Department of History

A.R.S.D. College, University of Delhi

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

Women of Bengal: Transformation in Ideas and Ideals  
1900-1947 **Bharati Ray** 3

Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement  
c. 1925-1948 **S. Anandhi** 24

Condition of Women Workers in Madras, Madurai,  
and Coimbatore 1914-1939 **M.V. Shobhana** 42

Caste, Class and Political Organisation of Women  
in Travancore **Meera Velayudhan** 61

Women's Journals in Andhra during the Nineteenth  
Century **V. Ramakrishna** 80

Portrayal of Women in Premchand's Stories: A Critique  
**Charu Gupta** 88

REVIEW ARTICLE Re-reading Race, Gender and English  
Texts in Post-Independence India: A Contest of  
Subjectivities **K. Vinod Chandran** 115

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 19

NUMBERS 5-6

MAY-JUNE 1991

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

### Inland

Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250
(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)	

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

## NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted to *Social Scientist* should not be under consideration by any other publication. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate, typewritten on one side only, and double-spaced throughout. Footnotes, including comments and references, should be indicated consecutively through the article by raised numerals corresponding to the list of notes placed at the end. They should provide the author's forename and/or initials, title of publication, publisher, place of publication and date of publication. The styles to be adopted for books and journal articles is indicated below:

1. A. Eckstein, China's Economic Relations, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
2. See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', Journal of Comparative Economics, December 1979, pp. 325-45.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Please note the following change in address of *Social Scientist*:  
C-20 Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## *Introduction*

A distinct space for the study of women in Indian historiography is a relatively recent concession. Doubts and scepticism about gender studies still linger in some quarters; yet they are tolerated, even if not fully accepted. Whether this grudgingly conceded space has an enclosure of its own is doubtful, as historians are still inclined to treat women as an adjunct. The attention, particularly for the colonial period, is riveted on women's participation in one movement or the other, initiated and led by male leaders. Gender studies in history are struggling to be free of this syndrome and to locate women in the process of history. The essays in this number dealing with women in colonial India are attempts in this direction.

The six essays collected here fall into three categories. The two essays by Bharati Ray and S. Anandhi deal with the consciousness of middle class women, the next two by M.V. Shobhana and Meera Velayudhan are concerned with the lives of working class women, and the last two essays by V. Ramakrishna and Charu Gupta examine how women figure in literary production.

Bharati Ray takes a synoptic view of the ideas and aspirations of middle class educated women in colonial Bengal. The essay is constructed around three themes: first, the attitude of middle class women to the traditional role assigned to them; second, the changes in their ideas and aspirations; and finally, the limitations and contradictions in the pattern of these changes. What was happening to middle class women in Bengal during this time did not constitute a sharp break with the past, but it did connote a change in their lives. A new ethos emerged, influencing beliefs, shaping activities and defining new goals. As a consequence a new consciousness emerged among women, sensitive to the subordination and disadvantages they suffered under patriarchy.

Anandhi's essay, 'Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement, 1925-48', highlights the consistent struggle launched by the Self Respect Movement 'against women's oppression and its attempt to dismantle the ubiquitous structure of patriarchy in Tamil society', a theme generally ignored by most studies on the Self Respect Movement. The movement, led by E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, sought to undermine the patriarchal authority by opposing ideas and institutions like chastity and marriage. The attitude of the Self Respect Movement towards women's question was in sharp contrast to that of the national movement. While the national movement valorised patriarchy and

used it for 'mobilising women for politics, the Self Respect Movement mobilised them to contest patriarchy.'

A study of women textile workers in Madurai, Madras and Coimbatore is used by Shobhana to explore the consciousness of working class women and the forms of its articulation. Women were exploited and discriminated against in these mills by the proprietors as well as by the *maistries*. More importantly, entering the workplace itself meant additional misery for women due to the heavy burden imposed by the disjunction between the workplace and home. Yet, by 'becoming direct participants in social production, new avenues for self-realisation were opened up for women.'

Meera Velayudhan examines the implications of women's experience in public activities in the context of social reform and working class struggles in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore in Kerala. The struggles of the coir workers indicate that 'employment outside the home provided the basis for a re-evaluation of women's sex roles and identity'. Also they underline the severe constraint under which women participated in public activities.

The contribution of V. Ramakrishna, 'Women's Journals in Andhra during the Nineteenth Century', focuses on the interest evinced by the intelligentsia in improving the conditions of women. The large number of women's journals published in Telugu debated the problems women faced in Andhra society. Interestingly there is a difference in the perspectives of journals edited by men and women. While the men-edited journals were more concerned with issues like chastity, house-keeping and fragility, the women-edited journals highlighted social problems like child marriage and prostitution. Despite limitations, these journals 'made a singular contribution to the spread of enlightenment among women'.

Charu Gupta takes a critical look at the portrayal of women in Premchand's stories. Rejecting the adulation-denunciation approach so familiar in the existing studies on Premchand, this essay locates Premchand's treatment of women in the context of the tensions and contradictions within both ideology and society'. Being an advocate of change, Premchand's approach was 'not merely reflectionist but also interventionist'. What is important is that his writings have left 'behind a legacy that stirs the consciousness of the oppressed people'.

In the rapidly expanding field of gender studies in India a class perspective does not seem to have gained much ground. The essays in this number grope towards the objective of incorporating the concept of class in gender studies, as women's oppression cannot be understood without being sensitive to the inter-relatedness of class and sex.

K.N. PANIKKAR

Centre for Historical Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi



BHARATI RAY\*

*Women of Bengal: Transformation in Ideas  
and Ideals, 1900–1947\*\**

INTRODUCTION

The omission or trivialization of women in traditional history is a common complaint of feminist historians (see, e.g. Kelly 1984: 1–15; Minault 1983: 59–60), who advocate the construction of women's history from their own perspective, and the collection of information about them primarily from themselves (i.e. their writings, oral transcripts, etc.). Archival records yield but little data about the distaff side. The present essay follows this line of thought. It highlights some aspects of women's history in colonial Bengal, and explores the changes that occurred in their ideas and aspirations in the period between 1900 and 1947. The focus, however, is only on the urban middle class, i.e. upper-caste, educated Bengalis, the group which by and large had acted as collaborators of the Raj in the nineteenth century, but turned away from this unequal friendship to participate in the freedom movement in the twentieth century. Teachers, lawyers, small landlords, public officials *et al* belonged to this class (Sen 1977: 3–67, 66–86; Liddle and Joshi 1986: 70–72). The study of their ideas is worth undertaking because it was precisely these middle class urban families who felt the full impact of the rapid changes in the century and disseminated their thoughts through their positions as authors, teachers, scientists, etc. They were thus in a strategic position and their adjustments set the patterns which others followed. It is with the middle class women and among them the married and the young unmarried sections of the Hindu community that this paper is concerned. Other catego-

---

\* Department of History, Calcutta University.

\*\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Philadelphia, 1985. I appreciate the comments made by the discussants, Shirley Lindebaum and Geraldine H Forbes, and by the Chairperson, Barbara Miller. I am grateful to Rayna Rapp, Carolyn Lougee and Estelle Freedman for taking the trouble of reading the paper and offering comments.

ries, i.e. women of different religious groups like Muslims, or women with special problems, like widows or deserted wives, fall outside its scope. The questions posed here are: what was the attitude of the early to mid-twentieth century women to the traditional roles assigned to them and the conventional value system? How and to what extent, if at all, did their ideas and aspirations undergo any transformation? What were the limitations and contradictions in the pattern of their change?

In brief, I argue that during the period under survey, as a response to multiple factors, there were major alterations in the perceptions, and aspirations of these women. Not that there was a break from all past traditions, nor that middle class women at all levels were equally transformed. In fact, serious contradictions constrained their views and actions. Nevertheless, one can trace the evolution, albeit slow, of new beliefs shaping their goals, attitudes and activities. What began to emerge, although in an embryonic form, is an awareness of, and an attempt to change, women's subordination and disadvantages under patriarchy. This essay centers around that section of women who helped develop the process, although for the sake of convenience and in order to avoid repetitions, I often use all-encompassing general terms like 'girls', 'women', etc. My aim, however, is to sketch the broad trends of change and give a very general overview, rather than undertake an in depth and concentrated analysis of change in any particular domain.

I have relied for sources primarily on women's own writings, especially in women's journals. Significantly, the contributors to the journals, e.g. Charumati Devi or Shatasindhu Ghosh, were mostly housewives about whose bio-data little is known. Only a few regular contributors, like Krishnabhabini Das (b. 1864) formed part of the elite leadership. I have also drawn heavily upon contemporary creative literature which at once reflects changing/continuing beliefs and shapes readers' views. I have attached special value to imaginative writing by women because it was the only public discourse in which women spoke on issues otherwise not discussed by them.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the imaginative literature—novels, short stories or poems—mentioned in this article were written by noted women, such as Kamini Roy (b 1864) and Shanta Devi (b 1893) who primarily addressed women readers and themselves belonged to the middle class. Their contributions are, therefore, of special relevance for the purpose of this article. Their writings have been supplemented by other relevant published literature and personal interviews with a number of women.

#### BACKGROUND

In order to appreciate the extent of the changes undergone by Bengali women in the twentieth century, it is necessary to give at the outset a broad and general description of the dominant Hindu cultural

framework and to identify the multiple disabilities and inequalities from which the women of Bengal—in fact Indian women as a whole—were suffering for centuries. Structurally, the Hindu family, was partilineal in descent, patrilocal in residence and patriarchal in authority. A sophisticated and highly complex socio-religious fabric was evolved in which sons, to the exclusion of daughters, were to carry on the family name and tradition, and to perform *Shraddha*, which occupied a central place in the Hindu psyche. The right and obligation to perform *shraddha* bound sons inexorably to the long line of ancestors in the family, while daughters were given away in marriage to their husbands to whose families they were supposed to belong.

Marriage, under customary Hindu law, was an indissoluble sacrament, but whereas a man could marry as many women as he wanted and could desert his wife, a woman had no similar rights. For a Hindu girl marriage was not an option; it was the only destination of life; its fulfilment lay in begetting a son for the family. She was married by her parents as part of their religious obligations, along with a dowry. Arranged marriage and pre-puberty marriage for girls were obligatory.<sup>2</sup> On marriage a bride was taken into her husband's family, which was usually 'joint'. It should be mentioned here that 'joint family'—a term defined in different ways by different scholars (see, e.g. Karve 1968: 89; Singer 1968: 4256)—characteristically meant joint residence, often joint ownership of property or business, of two or three generations related through males. The family structure was organised under the eldest male member of *karta*, while his wife, *ginni*, was the head of the domestic side of the household. A young bride's status was the lowest in the family, she was invariably assigned the hardest and most onerous domestic chores. Her position improved somewhat when she became the mother of a son, and assumed importance only when she became the *ginni*, usually at an advanced age. A woman's position was, however, always subordinate to her husband's in the hierarchy of authority within the family and her status in society depended entirely on his. This subordinate position stemmed largely from her economic dependence on male kins. According to the school of law which prevailed in Bengal, the right to inherit arose from the right to perform *shraddha*. A woman having no such right, except in very special cases, was not normally entitled to inherit. Even when she had the privilege, her rights over the inherited property were not absolute, but were in the nature of life-interest. She had absolute rights only over the gifts received at marriage, and she was not permitted to earn her living by working outside the home.

To legitimate this system, the Hindu scriptures and epics prescribed a *Weltanschauung* that institutionalised women's perpetual tutelage under men, and set the seal on women's role models. These emphasised chastity as the principal womanly virtue, housework and child-care

as the only forms of activity, unquestioned obedience and silent self-sacrifice as ideal feminine qualities, and imposed an ideology of subservience for women. The denial of the right of education, purdah, and an extremely rigid dichotomisation between private and public life/sphere (see Rosaldo 1974: 1723, for a good analysis of the implications of dichotomisation) assured the continuance of their prescribed roles and removed the possibility of any challenge from them. The organisation was deft. Women upheld the system and even seemed to be content. If there was, in fact, there must have been, individual resentment or resistance, it found little scope for formal outlet.

#### THE SETTING

The nineteenth century socio-religious reform movement<sup>3</sup>-a product of the confrontation and interaction of British colonial with Indian culture-devoted considerable attention to the improvement of the position of women (for details, see Kopf 1979, Mukherjee 1982, Leonard 1981). Consequently, sati was forbidden (1828), widow remarriage legalised (1856), and inter-course with wives below twelve years of age prohibited (1891). Alongside, the movement for female education was started, with the Christian missionaries and the Brahmos (a reformed Hindu sect) leading and the enlightened Hindus co-operating. Some of the first generation of educated women began to write and publish their works. For instance, Rassundari Devi (b 1810) brought out her delightful autobiography, *Amar Jiban* (My Life, 1876), and Kailasbasini Devi (b 1837) published the most graphic contemporary description of the degraded condition of Hindu women (K Devi 1863). *Bamabodhini Patrika* (Journal for Women's Enlightenment), the leading journal for women, had a host of women contributors, while top-ranking journals like *Bharati* flourished under women editors. Slowly, the purdah was lifted and a handful of women even ventured to work outside their homes. To give a few examples, Kumudini Khastagir (b 1865) took to teaching, Kadambini Ganguly (b 1861) practised medicine. Swarnakumari Devi (b 1855) formed the *Sakhi Samiti* (Women's Friendly Society, 1886), one of the first women's voluntary associations in Bengal.

It has been argued that the leadership of this movement, the English-educated professional class, wanted not to make women independent or equal of men in the family or the public life. The aim was to make them better equipped as mothers/wives to lend their menfolk social support in the colonial setting. Understandably, the model of the 'modern' women was imported from Victorian England and dressed with traditional Indian womanly qualities. Women, on their part, it is claimed, were influenced by male-defined values and made no attempt to assert their special interests in the face of male opposition (Borthwick 1984: 359-60; Murshid 1953: 198). But it must be

remembered that the aims of a movement do not always coincide with the results. Far from being blindly manipulated by the male leaders, a number of women, when educated, began to argue for themselves and articulate their view, if not so visibly in the nineteenth, certainly in the twentieth century. This was also a response to several significant indigenous and external developments which directly affected them.

Western women, like Margaret Cousins and Annie Besant, inspired their Indian counterparts to build organisational networks such as the All India Women's Conference, 1927. Interestingly, many issues of women's journals, like the *Bangalalakshmi* and *Jayasree*, carried photographs and biographies of western women successful in public life, thus offering a new role model to Bengali women. But then this factor must not be exaggerated; nor can it be justifiably argued that the 'call of resurgence came to them (Indian women) from the West.' Papanek is right in saying that it would be 'wrong', to attribute the 'growing awareness among Indian women' to 'the so-called western influence' (Papanek 1984: 133). There were other more weighty factors.

Exceedingly vital in the context of Bengal was the impact of the two world wars, especially the evacuation of Calcutta (1941-2) after the bombing of Rangoon, and the staggering inflation (a 250% rise in the essential commodities in the middle class cost of living in Calcutta between 1939 and 1947, Census of India 1951, 6: 126). These, along with the unprecedented Bengal famine of 1943-4, when more than a million people died and hundreds of women and children were sold, shook the country's socio-economic structure and cultural framework (Greenough 1982: 183-236).<sup>4</sup> In its wake a new social ethos began to emerge. In this context, one must take into account the leftist ideology which made its inroad into Bengal since the 1930s. Not that it paid particular attention to women's problems, but it generated a contempt for traditional and religious beliefs, weakening their hold on the Bengali mind.

Of the indigenous forces that altered the women's world, the most momentous was perhaps the freedom struggle. Gandhi was certainly no radical thinker of women's liberation; he was against women's gainful employment and preferred to be a moral other than an economic force in society. But his powerful advocacy for social justice to women (however limited) and special call to women who could 'outdistance' men by 'many a mile' in his non-violent struggle removed the stigma of their inferiority and imparted to them a new confidence. However, since Gandhian organisation of ideology retained the conventional notions of 'feminine' qualities, it has often been argued that women's participation in the freedom movement was an extension of their traditional role. (e.g. see Mies 1979: 293). Also the conversion by the male leaders of the struggle against the Raj into *deshpuja* (worship of the motherland) brought the movement within women's domain, religion being a culturally decreed female concern. But whatever the

rationale for involvement, the very fact of women's coming out of the cocoon of the home to take part in extra-familial activities was an assault on the domestic/public demarcation and directly influenced women's thinking and behaviour (Ray 1986: 88–90, and Ray 1985–86: 14–57). All these brought new perspectives and dimensions to Bengali women's lives and thoughts, which will be studied in two following sections: the first will focus on unmarried young women, the second on married women.

#### UNMARRIED YOUNG WOMEN

In a Bengali family the birth of a daughter spelt disaster, as pithily expressed in a widely circulated proverb: 'A girl may be thrown away; she is a loss to you anyway, whether death takes her or marriage' (De 1952: 43). Ever since childhood girls were induced to internalize an ascribed inferiority and were prepared only for their life after marriage. A rather interesting part of their training was observing *bratas*, which expressed in a 'more homespun form' the same values prescribed by the scriptures and epics (Roy 1975: 36). For instance, a particularly popular *brata* in Dacca was *Maghamandala* or the mounds of the month of *Magha* (corresponding roughly to 15 January/15 February). The young girls would get up early on winter morning and make five mounds with ash-dust, tree-leaves and turmeric powder. While pouring honey and melted butter on the mounds, they would pray to be married into a well-off family so as to be able to afford the luxury of eating rice with milk. (Anon 1904–5). On the symbolic plane, the rituals ordained that the ultimate aim of girls was marriage and a comfortable life at the in-laws'. The girls had no choice, since they were given only elementary education at a primary level before they were married off between the ages of eight and twelve.

#### URGE FOR EDUCATION

The process of imparting some education to the daughters of the middle class families, either at home or in school, had been initiated in the nineteenth century. The primary motivation of most parents was to make their daughters more eligible as prospective brides, because increasingly men sought educated brides, preferably with some knowledge of English (Chaudhurani 1906: 2021), in order to have a 'help mate' in professional career and a companion in personal life. Not that this consideration was totally eliminated, but slowly a new logic of female education began to gain ground. Abala Bose (b 1855), a leading educationist argued that women should have 'a deeper and extended' education, 'not because we may make better matches for our girls . . . not even that the services of the daughter-in-law may be more valuable in the home of her adoption, but because woman like man is first of all a mind, and only in the second place physical and a body' (Bose 1907). Kamini Roy, in an address delivered at a girls' school,

claimed that the true aim of women's education was to contribute to their all-round advancement and realisation of their potentials (Roy 1918: 18). Young women began to respond to this life of thought. Hindu girls, studying in schools with Brahma and Christian girls showed distinct keenness on pursuing studies. Some of them begged their guardians to be allowed to take at least the Entrance (School leaving) Examination before being married off (Gupta 1911-12). The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, which fixed the minimum age of marriage for a boy at eighteen and for a girl at fifteen, made it possible for them to realise their ambition. Table I gives a rough idea about the progress of female education from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. Due to the non-availability of detailed statistics, however, it is not possible to isolate data specific to the urban middle class, but clearly they were the principal beneficiaries.

Table I  
Number of Girls under Instruction in Recognised Institutions for  
General Education in Bengal

	1937-8	1946-7
Primary Schools	6,84,758	7,57,806
Middle Schools	16,872	56,084
High Schools	24,610	47,197
Colleges	1,794	4,142
Total	7,28,034	8,65,229

Source: *Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947, Decennial Review, 2: 362-9.*

During the same period, the number of high schools for girls increased from 91 to 141, and expenditure on these schools rose from Rs 21,52,418 to Rs 36,10,790 (*Progress of Education, 1937-47, 1: 89*). Some of the female students developed career aspirations as well. Pushpamoyee Basu (b 1907), an ex-school teacher, reminisced, 'When I was a student, the main objective of most girls who went to school was to acquire a modicum of education which would help them to contract a suitable marriage. Later, when I was teaching, I found a number of girls planning in terms of gainful employment, particularly since the 1940s, possibly as an impact of the second world war' (personal interview). Changed economic conditions induced middle class parents of modest means to encourage their daughters' education as an investment for the future and a means of relief from the pressure to marry them off (K. Devi 1931). Table II registers women's enhanced interest in career-oriented education.

Table II  
Number of Girls under Instruction in Institutions for Vocational  
Education in Bengal:

		1937-8	1946-7
College:	Law	2	11
	Medicine	28	82
	Education	78	61
School:	Art	6	26
	Medicine	46	124
	Normal & Training	361	246
	Technical and Industrial	2,112	2,224
	Commerce	79	113

*Source: Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947, Decennial Review, 2: 370-88.*

An important aspect of the evolving educational structure was the introduction of co-education at the college and vocational institutional level, which offered female students an opportunity to meet their male counterparts on equal terms. Initially, a sort of 'unseen purdah' prevailed, and female students could enter the class-room if accompanied by their professor (Majumdar 1967: 106). Gradually, this was lifted, and they participated fully in the corporate life of the college, especially in debating and dramatics.

Though the pro-co-education stand has been recently challenged, and it has been argued that women should stay away from male-controlled educational establishments and build women centred institutions (Rich 1979: 1267), this kind of female-oriented logic was unknown to the women of Bengal. In any case, to the women of the first half of this century the top priority was the acquisition of some form of education (entirely denied for centuries), so that some degree of equality with men could be achieved.

#### BREAKING NEW GROUNDS

Women during the period under survey started disputing the construction of artificial differences between male and female nature and spheres of work, especially since they saw that societally achievement and status were linked to the (male) public sphere alone. The ideological disparity between the old school and the new was indicated by Kamini Roy in a fictional debate written in the form of a poem.

Grandmother: 'Men and women are different from one another and are mutually complimentary. How can there be absolute equality between them? . . . You are a mother, a wife, a sister, the nerve-centre of home. . .



If you get involved with the sordid business of the outside world, you will lose your femininity.'

Granddaughter: 'The young generation does not accept the doctrine that a woman's only destiny is wifehood and motherhood . . . nor that her only place is in the home. . . Why should a woman be confined to home and denied her rightful place in the society?. . . Women of to-day desire, without fear or inhibitions, all round self-development.' (Roy 1924: 113)

Similar ideas were being expressed in other contemporary writings as well. Popular and scholarly journals began to carry the new views expressed by women. In *Navabharat*, a prestigious journal, a woman asserted, 'Marriage has its uses, but it cannot be a woman's only objective in life' (S. Devi 1924-25). *Manasi O Marmabani*, another popular journal, carried the story of a 'modern' Calcutta girl telling her aunt, 'We will not accept the scriptures. . . . Life has a higher purpose. We mean to achieve that' (Bose 192829). A woman contributor in *Jayasree* contended almost in the tone of a Betty Friedan, 'The so-called feminine virtues have made women only women and not human' (S. Devi 1931). In the same journal, Lila Roy (b 1900), a political activist, expounded a feminist philosophy. 'In terms of brain power there is no difference between men and women. . . . The artificial demarcation of their spheres is, therefore, totally illogical. In fact, both should be able to participate in the same kind of activities. A woman needs exactly what a man needs for self-development' (Ray 1940: 102).

Young women of Bengal, deeply influenced by these thoughts, began to participate in activities traditionally forbidden to them. In the nineteenth century just a handful of women (mostly Brahmos or Christians) had ventured to do waged work; in the twentieth a relatively large number and some Hindu women joined the work force. The general preference appears to have been for the medical and teaching professions (Das 1911). But under the post-war economic pressure middle class women in modest income groups (often without a male earning member) took up an assortment of jobs, as stenographers, telephone operators, office-girls, personnel in the Air Raid Protection Force, or the Food Rationing Department, and so on. There is no reliable statistics for women's employment during the period, but from census surveys (1921, 1951), one can state with some amount of confidence that in the 1940s there was an upward curve in the employment of Bengali middle class girls. In most families, their contribution was a substantial element in the household resources, giving them enhanced status and decision making authority within the family which they often exerted (personal interviews with Sarala Ghosh, b. 1904, a physician, and Nalini Das, b 1916, ex-principal of Bethune College).

Unmarried girls also commenced looking after the aged parents and this was the beginning of a momentous change in Bengal society as revealed by Standing's mid-1980 survey—a 'shift in responsibility' from sons to unmarried daughters in terms of filial duties (Standing 1985: 36).

A novel development among young women, especially students, was their politicisation. This was made feasible by the freedom struggle. Some women freedom fighters like Bina Das (b 1911) and Kalpana Datta (b 1913) opted for armed conflict (see Forbes 1980; Das Gupta 1954). The student members of the *Dipali Sangha* of Dacca founded by Lila Nag (Róy) prompted the same cause. They also conducted debates and seminars on issues, such as women's rights and social rehabilitations of raped women, and worked for promoting primary education (Nag 1929–30). There were other more politically active student bodies, e.g. the *Chatra Bhawan* which housed *biplabi* women and acted as a linkage between students and *biplabis*. The All India Students' Federation, etc. The *Mahila Rashtriya Sangha* (Women's Political Association, 1927) formed by Lalika Ghosh commanded effective student support, and a large number of college students in her 'female volunteer corps' organised youth forums and women's conferences throughout the state (see Das Gupta 1963 for details). Female students also stood in the forefront of the *Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti* (Woman's Association for Self-Defence, 1943), which established its branches in various district towns of Bengal—Khulna, Chittagong, Barisal, Bankura Rangpur, etc. In Calcutta female student leaders like Kalyani Das (b 1907) and Manikuntala Sen (b 1910) held street-corner meetings, organised strikes in educational institutions, travelled unaccompanied in public transport to collect party funds (Sen 1982: 46), assaulting traditional norms of womanly conduct. The exigencies of the freedom struggle legitimised this violation and in the process marked a momentous development in terms of women's lives. Because female invasion of public sphere was an altogether startling phenomenon in Indian society. For all practical purposes these women had departed from the scriptural system of strict confinement of women to home.

#### ATTITUDE TOWARDS MARRIAGE

This is not to suggest that a departure from the old ethos was a trait common to all young women of Bengal. For the overwhelming majority, 'married' was still the culturally coveted status. Social and familial pressures pushed towards matrimony. Dowry, too, remained an accepted practice since marriage was difficult without dowry. And yet one can discern the process of transformation in their attitude towards marriage. A major factor responsible for this was the raising of the age of their marriage, as Table III shows:

Table III

1	2	3	1911	5	1941 (Sample survey)	
			4		6	7
Age	Total Number of women	Number of married or widowed women	Percentage of column 3 to 2	Total number of women	Number of married and widow women	Percentage of column 6 to 5
5-10 yrs	1000	126	12.6	31164	2151	6.9
10-15 yrs	1000	705	70.5	24565	9762	37.74
15-20 yrs	1000	967	96.7	22102	18469	83.54

Source: *Census of India 1911*, volume 5, part I and *Census of India 1941*, volume 4.

The census surveys cover a wide spectrum of Bengali Hindu women, and it is difficult to isolate data relating specifically to urban middle class. Nevertheless, since we can see that the percentage of pre-fifteen year old girls being married off had been nearly halved, it is reasonable to infer that considerable numbers of urban middle class girls were allowed to remain unmarried at least till age fifteen. The girls themselves showed a distinct preference for late marriage, since it would give them better educational facilities and a few more years of relative freedom in their natal homes (Kapadia 1958: 154).

The raising of the age of marriage, linked with educational opportunities, enabled young girls to formulate their own ideas about marriage and husband which their counterparts earlier in the century had been unable to do. Thanks to the spread of education they were now exposed to the notion of love and romance being the basis of marriage. These concepts were publicised through the new indigenous romantic literature which idealised mutual attraction between a man and a woman and was avidly read by young women (Majumdar 1986: 153). Saratchandra, in particular, captivated female readers. His *Parineeta* (The Wedded One), a love story first published in 1914 had twenty-six reprints in as many years indicating a continued popularity. His novels, when converted into films, ran to packed houses and when dramatised became great hits (Mukherjee 1982: 196, 234). The screen and the stage are the most popular forms of entertainment in Bengal, the matinee shows especially being attended by women. Young women, exposed to these forms of media, developed a sort of romantic imagination and sought both lover and friend in a husband. As Subhadra Sen (b 1927), a housewife says, 'I wanted my relationship

with my husband to be based on companionship and romantic love.' Supriya Acharya (b 1922), a left-wing party worker and Sarala Ghosh, a physician, reciprocated this sentiment (personal interviews). Despite the strong criticism by some western feminists of the hold of romance on women's minds (see, e.g. Greer 1979: 178), one must remember that in early twentieth century Bengal the concept enabled women to formulate alternative views about marriage.

Sometimes these proved to be frustrating because of the persistence of arranged marriages and because in sex-segregated Bengali society, the majority of middle class girls had no opportunity for meeting men outside the family circle. Notwithstanding these constraints, new ideas were taking shape. And in the more liberal families, where the opportunity existed, or when co-education provided the scope, a few girls opted for marriage of their own choice. Choice marriage, it is important to note, is a direct challenge to the Hindu Structure, posing as it does a serious threat to endogamous caste purity. G.B. Desai's study of Gujarat girls in 1945 reveals that 57.8% of unmarried girls favoured choice marriage, and C.A. Hate's inquiry among educated Hindu girls in Bombay in 1946 shows an overwhelming 74% response in the same direction (Desai 1957: 24142). There are no similar surveys available for Bengali girls. Indirect evidence from contemporary creative literature (e.g. Aparajita Devi 1937) and popular films like *Udayar Pathe* (released in 1944) would point to choice marriage being idealized, if not materialised, while severe condemnation of the practice in conservative writings would indicate its emergence as a serious threat. In actuality, some young women, like Pratibha Bannerjee (b 1927), an ex-justice, flouted family opposition to marry the men they loved, whereas some others, as Maitreyi Devi (b 1914), an author, relates in her autobiographical novel (M. Devi 1983: 10920), had to give up their choice under family pressure.

#### MARRIED WOMEN

As mentioned earlier, a Hindu woman after marriage usually was transferred to her husband's joint family. Traditionally, the most important person for a bride was her mother-in-law, since custom allowed her no contact with her husband during the day. 'It would tend to destroy the joint family if conjugal relationship gained relative primacy' (Gore 1968: 7). A mother-in-law, with but few exceptions, evinced little sympathy for her daughter-in-law, presumably because the latter posed a potential hazard to a power she herself had acquired after a long period of waiting and persevering. Jyotirmoyee Devi (b 1898), an author, recalls how on arrival at her in-laws' at the age of ten, a nervous and insecure child, she was greeted with uncharitable appraisals of her looks and curt commands from her mother-in-law (J. Devi 1986: 5562). A daughter-in-law was forced to

give in to all the whims and wishes of the mother-in-law, having no alternatives but to be a submissive member of her new family.

Behavioural patterns, however, slowly changed with time, specifically after the elevation of the age of marriage for girls. Brides now came older, bolder, somewhat educated and able to develop a closer relationship with their husbands. They resented the authority of the mother-in-law and endeavoured to assert their own, thus generating a new kind of tension in the traditional family structure-just the kind of conflict the believers in the joint family system had hoped to avoid. Increasingly, daughters-in-law preferred to break away from the joint family home, if financially feasible. Education had fostered their individualism and personal ambition-both incompatible with the joint-family ethos-and had made them keen to live in nuclear families (Kapadia 1958: 154), which would offer them more time for themselves. A favourite theme of contemporary fictions, films, sketches and folk-theatre (the most favourite media at the common people's level) was highlighting the part of the daughter-in-law in the break up of the joint family. Interestingly, however, the new generation of women, though residing in separate households, did not fully adopt the western nuclear family pattern. They clung to the ideological concept of the joint family, and recognised a set of joint family norms and obligations, such as assuming full responsibility for husband's unwed sister, widowed mother or ageing parents, and active participation in social occasions like family weddings (*Towards Equality* 1974: 5960). Their rejection was of the hierarchical authority-structure that governed every day life in a common residence and kitchen.

#### CONJUGAL RELATIONS

Since the nineteenth century, the direction of change in conjugal relations had been towards the establishment of a companionship (Borthwick 1984: 11424). Increasingly, Indira Devi (b 1873) and her husband Pramatha Chaudhury jointly looked after the notable journal *Sabujapatra* (The Green Leaf); Radharani Devi (b. 1904) and Narendra Dev were a well-known literary couple; C.R. Das and his wife Basanti Devi (b 1880) fought in the freedom struggle; Rama Chaudhury (b 1912) and Jatindra Bimal Chaudhury devoted themselves to education; Uma Guha (b 1916) and Biraja Sankar Guha worked together at the Anthropological Survey of India; Dr Sarala Ghosh and Dr P.K. Ghosh practised medicine. There was a partnership between husband and wife which brought them to a level of equality and undermined, to some extent, the gender asymmetry sanctioned by custom.

Ideas of sexual fulfilment and pleasure were also in the process of change. As long as child-marriage prevailed, marital sex was regarded as a tool for procreation and, therefore, a semi-religious obligation. It was not possible for a child-wife of twelve or thirteen

years of age to enjoy it although a later development of interest cannot be ruled out; hers was an attitude of submission to her lord. Radharani Devi in a powerful story portrays the contrast between a child-wife, who had entered into marital relations before she was awakened to the need, and a newly married adult woman to whom sex was an exciting, enjoyable experience (R. Devi 1928-29). But then, even an adult woman was not much educated about sex or knowledgeable about her own body. Women's sexuality was (still is) an anathema in Hindu culture—a fearful object to be kept suppressed, and not to be publicly discussed (private discussions and jokes among women could not be controlled, though).

What became manifest in women's public articulations was a recognition and questioning of the age-old construction of inequalities between husband and wife and the double standard of morality. For instance, it was asked, 'In conjugal relations, why should a woman get less than the man' (Banganari 1931-32)? 'If two people are brought together into a relationship,' came another question, 'Why should one of them be chained to 'ideal' and the other allowed to be whimsical? What, in any case, is the value of an unfair ideal (A. Devi 1931-32)? Shailabala Ghoshjaya's *Janma Aparadhini* (one whose Birth Is An Offence, 1920) expresses, as powerfully as a piece of creative writing can do, the author's scathing criticism of the persecution of a woman by her husband and the total lack of familial support. The woman likens herself to a horse straining at the bits. Shanta Devi stated—through a short story—that rules of chastity should be observed by both the partners. A young wife, after a few days' absence, returned home to find her husband's mistress comfortably settled in the bedroom. She wiped off her *sindur* (vermillion mark), took off the iron bangle (the twin symbols of a woman's marriage) and left. Increasingly it was argued that a woman should have the right to write off an undesirable or unfair wedlock. 'Scriptures had been composed in the interest of selfish men, why should women be bound by them?' And the 'children's interest' argument was not valid, either. 'A stable home is ideal for a child, but separation between parents is preferable to frequent quarrels and violation of marital rules in the home' (S. Devi 1931-32). These arguments were further developed in the 1940s and discussed through public forums and popular magazines (see, e.g. Hui 1947-48). In actuality, of course, the overwhelming majority of women, even if discontented and unhappy, did not venture to leave their husbands owing to economic insecurity and social disapproval. Nevertheless, exceptions were not altogether unknown. Noted singer Sahana Devi (b 1897) left her husband for personal reasons (Sahana Devi 1978: 199) as did Nilima Devi, founder of the celebrated (now extinct) Signet Press of Calcutta (Mitra 1982).

It is significant that some women, in the process of analysing conjugal relations, came to comprehend some fundamental concepts of

feminism. Shatadalbasini Biswas, for one, perceived with considerable acumen that under the existing social order women, whether willing or not, had to render domestic and sexual services to men. 'What is the difference between a wife and a slave? Only this, that along with this slave (wife) a man receives money as well.' 'Women's backwardness,' she reasoned, 'is to men's advantage' (Biswas 1910-11). Another woman attributed the degeneration of India to the lop-sided male domination in society. 'As long as women remain subservient to men, and men their masters, this country can never achieve greatness' (Roy 1909-10). One Shatasindhu Ghosh posed a key question: what did political independence signify to women while they were chained in their own homes? 'Apart from national interests, women have their own group interests altogether independent of (even opposed to) men's interests' (Ghosh 1931-32).

If essays in women's journals did not establish the universal acceptance of the ideas propagated through them, they certainly indicated the emergence of a line of thought which served as a base for the future. The women who contributed-ordinary housewives-were presumably unable to translate their ideas into action. But the presence of their awareness as well as the absence of their corresponding action are both equally revealing historical phenomena.

#### BEYOND FOUR WALLS

A fall out of women's growing awareness of their own individualities was their desire to seek fulfilment in the public terrain. Apart from widely participating in the freedom movement (for details, see Bagal 1950: Das Gupta 1953: Ray, 1986 & 1985-86) which, as mentioned earlier, brought them outside their homes, they organised *on their own* various national, provincial and district associations for bringing women out of their subjugated position. Whereas the first national women's organisation was the *Bharat Stri Mahamandal* (Indian Women's Association, 1910), formed by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani (b 1872), a political activist and feminist, the All India Women's conference (1927) was the premier one. At the provincial level, Abala Bose's *Nari Siksha Sammiti* (Association for Women's Education, 1919) aimed to open primary schools, maternity and child welfare clinics and vocational training centres for women; the Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Association (although initiated by Gurusaday Dutt in 1925, it was almost immediately taken over by female leaders), with branches in various districts, worked for women's social and educational 'upliftment'; the All Bengal Women's Union lobbied for abolishing immoral traffic in women; the *Nari Seva Sangha* (Women's Service Society, 1944) endeavoured to give financial help to women in need. Women also organised local societies in small towns (e.g. Faridpur Women's Association, Chittagong District Women's Association) to propagate self-reliance and sisterhood. By the 1940s

every district had one or more women's societies (Everett 1979; 68-75, 82-100; Ghosh 1950; U. Devi 1932-33).

The women participants in these organisations-drawn from urban educated families-did not attempt mass mobilisation, which was a serious drawback in their action-programmes. And yet their organizations can claim a two-dimensional importance in Indian women's history. First, unlike their counterparts in the nineteenth century, these women's organisations were formed and led by women, and signified the transfer of leadership of women's movements from men to women. Central to this change was the recognition that the responsibility of 'regenerating' women belonged to women. As one contributor wrote in *Bangalakshmi*, the journal of Saroj Nalini Association, 'It is women, not men, who must carry the call of awakening to the door of every woman' (Ghosh 192930). In effect, these women were emphasizing woman-bonding and reclaiming for women decision-making authority regarding their own affairs. They provided the leadership and initiative in spreading women's education and creating awareness among women. For instance, Sarala Ray and Abala Bose played pioneering roles in founding Gokhale Memorial School and Brahmo Girls' School.

Second, organised women often functioned as pressure-groups for enacting reform legislations, such as the Child Marriage Prohibition Act of 1929 (see Ramusack 1981). While most of their demands could be met without upsetting the existing social structure, their agitation in favour of the Hindu Code Bill for reforms in Hindu personal laws was of an altogether different nature. The Indian Women's Charter of Rights formulated by the All India Women's Conference (1945) demanded changes (e.g. equal rights of inheritance for women, right to divorce, etc.) which were opposed to the hierarchical Hindu *weltanschauung*. Omvedt is right in commenting that this confrontation with Hindu tradition represented 'the culmination' of the women's movement in colonial Bengal (Omvedt 1987: 35).

In another terrain, married women were beginning to tread unconventional routes. Custom had decreed their total economic dependence on their menfolk. The entry of married women into the job market began under the economic compulsions of the second world war: later an urge for economic independence emerged. They advocated economic equality as the basis for other forms of equality between husband and wife (K. Devi 1931-32; L. Roy 1940) and pleaded for paid work outside home. Women with waged work, however, had to cope with double burden since cultural norms did not permit men's sharing of domestic chores. For most women, too, efficiency as housewife was a major source of pride. On the other hand, their heavy work load created tensions in many a family, and experienced in the public world informed their critique of their subordination.



Some of those who could not or did not do paid work outside the home regretted their economic capitulation. For instance, a woman in a revealing story in the journal *Parichaya* portrayed a young wife's silent contempt for her own 'parasitic existence' when she came in contact with a married woman who had a paid job in the Food Rationing Department (Roy: 1947-48). Married women's desire for economic independence could not be justified in terms of Hindu tradition, and contained an element of rebellion against scriptural norms.

#### MOTHERHOOD

If there was any one area in a woman's life which remained unaffected by new values, where women stuck to tradition, it was the primacy of motherhood. Its glorification continued to be projected in various forms of visual and performing arts and literature. Anurupa Devi's (b 1882) best selling novel, *Ma* (The Mother) was an unadulterated sanctification of motherhood. In Tagore's *Yogayoga* (Links and Gaps, 1929), acclaimed to be his best novel, Kumu had left her husband because of a fundamental social and cultural incompatibility, but returned on discovering that she was carrying his child although, to her knowledge, he had found a mistress. In real life, a woman, if a mother, would ascribe top priority to her 'noble' maternal 'duties.' For instance, Kamini Roy, when once asked why she had given up writing poetry, replied, 'My children are my living poems' (*Sahitya Sadhak Charitamala* 5: 8).

One way of explaining this is in terms of the formidable strength of patriarchal ideology. Another way would be to see it as something too valuable to women to undermine. Under the existing system, the prime time for Indian women was-and is-mature motherhood, because the mother-son emotional bond is closer than any other relationship, forming the core (to borrow the words of Wolf 1974: 168) of her 'uterine family.' Here the son finds his greatest emotional support and this the mother builds up as a security for her old age. In Bengal, in particular, motherhood has a deeply ingrained cultural connotation, deriving its source from the indigenous pre-Aryan mother-goddess cult. Kali, the presiding deity of Bengal, expresses the dominance of the female principle over the male; motherhood, seen in her image, signifies dominance and power, to the advantage of all mothers in Bengal. This is why nothing like the western feminist theory of motherhood as the principal source of women's bondage was (has been) developed in Bengal. This is also a reason why although the age of marriage for women had gone up since the 1920s, late marriage could hardly check the very high birth-rate (Census of India 1961, 1: 63).

The only noteworthy changes in this area were that child-mothers had yielded place to adult mothers, infant mortality had gone down (Census of India 1951: 372) and educated mothers devoted a great deal

of personal care to children's education, teaching them at home and helping them with their school work. As Supriya Acharya said, 'My attitude to my children is more positive than my mother's. I am ambitious for them and have personally supervised their studies' (personal interview). Contemporary literary evidence would confirm this increased maternal input in the children's careers. This was not especially anti-awareness of motherly responsibilities for the development of children. In this one crucial area, women's ideas evince but little fundamental reorientation until to-day.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this essay I have discussed Bengali Hindu women who, if a minority, were a highly significant minority. They represented the articulate, educated and publicly active urban group, differing sharply from their non-literate, subservient, purdah-bound counterparts. They were concerned about the proper place of women in society, sought to remove gender inequalities in certain areas and raised some fundamental questions about their lives. Collectively through their writings and organized group actions they were emerging as a pressure-group; while at the individual level, they worked to discover and assert their own identity. An ideology of self-fulfilment was forged and attempts made to enter the exclusively male public sphere. Women protested against the 'double standard' regarding marriage and morality, and demanded equal rights to inheritance and property. Through their participation in freedom struggle and activism in women's organisation, they paved the way for the legal and constitutional equality accorded to women in the post-independence period.

Nevertheless, it will be unhistorical to claim any radical or universal transformation among them. On the contrary, there were unmistakable inconsistencies and constraints within their process of change. Many a conventional notion was allowed to exist within the framework of the new value system; religiosity and self-sacrifice remained intrinsic parts of the 'female' concept, extolled in literature by female authors like Anurupa Devi and Nirupama Devi. New self-perceptions were often curiously ambiguous—for instance Shanta Devi wrote feminist stories, yet painted pictures of religious and traditional women. While some forms of gender asymmetry were attacked, other related fundamental issues were ignored. There was no assertion of a woman's right over her own body, no attack against the bases of patriarchy, such as the sexual division of labour, the organisation of family as a basic unit of male rule, etc.

Why were these issues not examined? How does one explain the contradictions and limitations in these conscious or semi-conscious women's viewpoints? One possible line of reasoning would be that during the colonial period the main, structured opposition was between

nationalism and colonialism, causing a struggle for hegemony between traditional Indian and western ideologies. This partly constrained women's sharp departure from tradition lest it was equated with westernisation. Another explanation would be in terms of the difficulties of women, operating in a patriarchal reality and groping for the tools and languages with which to cope with new feelings and experiences that clashed with old patriarchal values. A third answer would be the absence of any significant change in terms of economic power. Most of the women had not sought out gainful employment. Without any real economic change, ideas remained abstract. But undoubtedly, the most vital limitations of the women of our study and the imperfections in their consciousness were largely a reflection of their social milieu. They had no contact with the problems confronted by their less fortunate sisters, and hence were unable to mobilise the lower class and lower caste women with them. Their ideas never reached beyond their own periphery to deal with 'bread and butter' issues or the realities of rural women's lives. They thus failed to comprehend the closely interwoven multi-faceted structure of women's oppression in society and discern the relationship between gender oppression with other forms of oppression.

And yet they had begun the struggle. A nascent 'feminist' consciousness was emerging among them; they revealed a growing awareness of gender asymmetry and initiated moves to counter it. They left a legacy for the latter-day women to work upon for a society free from gender discriminations.

#### NOTES

1. An emblematic example is Shailabala Ghoshjaya (b 1894), *Sekh Andu*-a daring novel by contemporary standard-which discusses women's sexuality and an attachment between a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl, both forbidden by Hindu tradition.
2. Both the rules were interlinked with the preservation of caste-purity and were designed to prevent members of the lower caste from getting 'access' to the higher caste through women.
3. The movement had two strands. One attempted to 'modernise' society by importing ideas from the west. The other, the major one, strove to defend the indigenous Indian culture-against the colonial cultural onslaught-by reforming and reconstituting it.
4. Greenough (1982: vii) aptly observes that Satyajit Ray's striking film *Ashani Sanket* (Distant Thunder) underplays the gravity of the famine which still 'continues to have an impact' on Bengali 'consciousness.'
5. Elderly women, in the role of grandmothers, are left out in this essay because available evidence does not pointn to a major change in their perceptions.

#### REFERENCES

- Anon. 19045. 'Purbabanger Meyeli Brata' (Women's Rites in East Bengal) in *Prabasi* 4: 10.  
 Asthana, Pratima. 1974. *Women's Movement in India*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

- Bagal, J. 1950. 'Rashtriyo Andalone Bangamahila' (Bengali Women in Political Movements). In *Bethune School and College Centenary Volume*, ed. K. Nag Calcutta: Centenary Celebrations Committee.
- Banganari. 1931-32. 'Hindu View of Life.' In *Jayasree* 1: 1.
- Biswas, Shatadalbasini. 1910-11. 'Narishaktir Apachaya' (The Waste of Woman Power). In *Bharatamahila* 6: 2.
- Borthwick, Meredith. 1984. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bose, Abala. 1907. Report of Lecture in *Modern Review* 1:2.
- Bose, Hemamala. 192829. 'Kalodidi' (The Dark Sister). In *Manasi O Marmabanni* 21: 4.
- Census of India*. 1911. 5:1.
- Census of India*. 1941. 4.
- Census of India*. 1951. 6: 1A.
- Census of India*. 1961. 16: 1A.
- Chatterjee, Saratchandra. 1914. *Parineeta* (The Wedded One). In *Saratrachanavali: Birth Centenary Volume*. 1980. Calcutta. Sarat Samiti.
- Chaudhurani, Sarat Kumari. 1906. *Shubha Bibaha* (The Auspicious Wedding). *Saratkumari Chaudhurani Rachanavali*. 1950. Calcutta; Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.
- Das, Mrs. D.N. (Krishnabhabini). 1911. 'Striloker Kaj' (Women's Work). In *Bamabodhini Patrika* 48: 573.
- Das Gupta, Kamala. 1954. *Rakter Akshare* (In Letters of Blood). Calcutta: Navana.
- . 1963. *Swadhinata Sangrame Banglar Nari* (Bengali Women in the Freedom Movement). Calcutta: Vasundhara Prakasani.
- De, Sushil Kumar. 1952. *Bangla Prabod* (Bengali Proverbs). Calcutta: A Mukherjee & Co.
- Desai, Neera. 1957. *Woman in Modern India*. Bombay: Vora + Co.
- Devi. Anindita. 1931-32. 'Uro Megh' (The Passing Cloud). In *Jayasree* 1: 6.
- Devi, Anurupa. 1944 (fifth edition). *Ma* (The Mother). Calcutta: Mitra and Ghosh.
- Devi, Aparajita. 1937. *Bichitrarupini* (The Many Splendoured Woman). Calcutta: Gurudas Chattopadhyaya & Sons.
- Devi, Jyotirmoyee. 1986. *Smriti Bismritir Taranga* (Memoirs). Calcutta: Nirmal Book Agency.
- Devi, Kailasbasini. 1863. *Hindu Mahilaganer Hinabastha* (The Degraded Condition of Hindu Women). Calcutta: Durga Charan Gupta.
- Devi, Kanika. 1931. 'Bengali Meyer Arthik Swadhinata' (Bengali Women's Economic Independence). In *Jayasree* 1: 5.
- Devi, Maitreyee. 1977. *Na Hanyata* (That Which Cannot Be Killed). Calcutta: Prima Publications.
- Devi, Radharani. 1928-29. 'Parama Trisha' (The Thirst). In *Prabasi* 28: 4.
- Devi, Rassundari. 1876. *Amar Jiban* (My Life). Calcutta: Sarasilal Sircar.
- Devi, Sahana. 1978. *Smritir Kheya* (Memoirs) Calcutta. Prima Publications.
- Devi, Shanta. 1919. *Simthir Sinnidur* (The Vermillion Mark). Calcutta: Prabasi Karyalaya.
- Devi, Suprova. 1931-32. 'bibaha Bichheda Riti' (The Custom of Divorce). In *Jayasree* 1: 7.
- Devi, Susmita. 1931-32. 'Meyeder Meyelitwa' (Femininity of Women). In *Jayasree* 1: 7.
- Devi, Shyamamohini. 1924-25. 'Narir Kartavya' (Duties of Women). In *Navyabharat* 42: 5.
- Devi, Umasasi. 1932-33. 'Narisamiti' (Women's Associations). In *Bangalakshmi* 5: 8.
- Everett, J.M. 1979. *Women and Social Change in India*. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers.
- Forbes, G.H. 1980. 'Goddesses or Rebels? The Women Revolutionaries of Bengal.' In *The Oracle* 2: 2.
- Ghosh, Latika. 1950. 'Social and Educational Movements for women and By Women.' In *Bethune School and College Centenary Volume*, ed. K. Nag. Calcutta: Centenary Celebrations Committee.
- Ghosh, Santisudha. 1931-32. 'Pather Ingit' (The Way). In *Jayasree* 1: 3.
- Ghosh, Sarasibala. 1929-30. 'Narityer Adarsha' (Ideas of Womanhood). In *Bangalakshmi* 5: 6.
- Ghashjaya, Shailabala. 1917. *Sekh Andu*. Calcutta: Gurudas Chattopadhyaya & Sons.
- . 1919. *Janma Aparadhi* (One Whose Birth Is An Offence). Calcutta: Kar, Majumdar & Co.

- Gore, M.S. 1968. *Urbanization and Family Change*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Greenough, Paul R. 1982. *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-1944*. New York & London: Oxford University Press.
- Greer, Germaine. 1979. *The Obstacle Race*. London: Secker & Warburg Co.
- Hui, Shobha. 1947-48. 'Hindu Bibahe Samskarer Proyojoniyata' (The Need for Reforms in Hindu Marriage Laws). In *Prabasi* 44: 7.
- Kapadia, K.M. 1958. *Marriage and Family in India*. London: Oxford University Press (Indian Edition).
- Karve, Irawati. 1968. *Kinship Organisation in India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
- Kelly, Joan. 1984. *Women, History and Theory*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Kopf, David. 1979. *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Mind*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Leonard, Karen & John. 1981. 'Social Reform and Women's Participation in Political Life.' In *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, ed. Gail Minault. Delhi: Channakya Publications.
- Liddle, Joanna and Rama Joshi. 1986. *Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Maitra, Inanesh. 1987. *Nari Jagriti O Bangla Sahitya* (Women's Awakening and Bengali Literature). Calcutta: National Publishers.
- Majumdar, Lila. 1967. *Aar Konokhane* (Somewhere Else). Calcutta: Mitra & Ghosh.
- 1986. *Pakdandi* (Memoirs). Calcutta: Ananda Publishers.
- Mies, Maria. 1979. *Indian Women and Patriarchy*. New Delhi: Concept Publishers.
- Minault, Gail. 1983. 'Women and History: Some Theoretical Considerations.' In *Samya Sahkti* 1: 1.
- Mitra, Ashok. 1982. 'A Rebel and a Beacon.' In *The Telegraph*. 18 August.
- Mukherjee, S.K. 1982. *The Story of the Calcutta Theatres, 1753-1980*. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi.
- Mukherjee, S.N. 1982. 'Raja Rammohan Roy and the Debate on the Status of Women' in *Women in India and Nepal*, eds. M. Allen and S.N. Mukherjee. Australian National University Monograph on South Asia, no. 8.
- Murshid, Ghulam. 1983. *Reluctant Debutante*. Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad.
- Nag, Lila. 1929-30. 'Dipali.' In *Bangalakshmi* 5: 7.
- Omvedt, Gail. 1987. *Feminism and the Women's Movement in India*. Mimeograph. Bombay: Research Centre for Women's Studies, S.N.D.T. University.
- Papanek, Hannah. 1984. 'False specialization and the Purdah of Scholarship.' In *The Journal of Asian Studies* XL IV: 1.
- Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947. Decennial Review. 2 Vols.* New Delhi: Government of India.
- Ramusack, Barbara N. 1981. 'Women's Organizations and Social Change.' In *Women and World Change: Equity Issues in Development*, eds. Naomi Black and Ann Baker Cottrell. Beverly Hills. California: Sage Publications.
- Ray, Bharati. 1986. 'Swadeshi Movement and Women's Awakening in Bengal, 1903-1910.' In *The Calcutta Historical Journal* 9: 2.
- 1985-86. 'Freedom Movement and Women's Awakening in Bengal, 1911-1929.' In *The Indian Historical Review* 12: Numbers 12.
- Rich, Adrienne. 1979. 'toward a Woman Centred University.' In *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Rosaldo, M.Z. 1974. 'Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview.' In *Woman, Culture and Society*, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo & Louise Lamphere. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ross A.D. 1961. *The Hindu Family In Its Urban Setting*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Roy, Chhabi. 1947-48. 'Era Ora Aneke' (These, Those and Others). In *Parichaya* 17: 2.
- Roy, Kamini. 1918. *Balikasikshar Adarsha* (The Aim of Girls' Education). Calcutta: Sudhir Kumar Sen.
- 1924. *Thakurmar Chithi* (A Letter from A Grandmother). Calcutta: Sisir Kumar Neogy.

ANANDHI S.\*

## *Women's Question in the Dravidian Movement c. 1925–1948*

The *Suyamariathai Iyakkam* (Self Respect Movement) which was launched by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy Naicker in 1926, in an effort to democratise the Tamil Society, has been the theme of historical research by several non-Marxist and Marxist scholars.<sup>1</sup> In their writings the movement has been characterised in different ways—revivalist, pro-British, secessionist, anti-Brahmin etc.

A striking feature of the existing studies on the Self Respect Movement is their silence on its consistent struggle against women's oppression and its attempt to dismantle the ubiquitous structure of patriarchy in Tamil society. Although Marxist scholars like N. Ram and Arulalan have briefly dealt with this aspect of the movement,<sup>2</sup> a detailed systematic treatment of the same is yet to be done. This silence is significant because the question of women's emancipation was one of the central themes in the political agenda of the Self Respect Movement,<sup>3</sup> especially during its early phase.

The present paper is a modest attempt to fill this void in the current scholarship on the Self Respect Movement which is a result of writing history from the male point of view.<sup>4</sup> The paper therefore addresses itself to the question of how the movement perceived the women's question and in what manner it tried to resolve it.

### IDEAS OF PERIYAR

After establishing a break with the Congress in 1924, Periyar<sup>5</sup> began to articulate, rather stridently, his views on such institutions of Tamil society like religion, caste hierarchy, and patriarchy. Opposing the reformist zeal of his contemporaries like Gandhi and those of the past like Siddhar and Ramanujam,<sup>6</sup> he called for a total break with the retrograde elements of the Tamil past. Addressing the South Indian

---

\* Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Reform Conference in 1928, he said, '... I have gradually lost faith in social reform. For one who believes in radical change, self-respect, equality and progress, the alternative (to the present situation) is not mere reform; but radical reconstructive work which would *destroy the traditional structures*.'<sup>7</sup>

This yearning for a total change marked his position on women's question too. Within the ambience of the Self Respect Movement he was not content with taking up such conventional themes of women's emancipation like widow-remarriage and women's education which, even if successful, did not undermine the existing structure of patriarchy; but he raised questions relating to basic pillars of patriarchy, like the monogamous family and the norms of chastity prescribed for and enforced upon women. Even while advocating women's education, his attempt was to direct it against the structure of patriarchy. He noted, 'The quality of education imparted to woman till now has been one of training woman to be an efficient house-wife—by designing the curriculum to include cooking, music, tailoring etc. Thus woman's education has been an advertisement to acquire a 'qualified' husband.' He argued, women's education should have the aim of providing employment for women and thus making them economically independent.<sup>8</sup>

The most important idea he had advanced was about marriage and family which he identified as the key institutions sustaining patriarchy. Since marriage enabled women to be enslaved as the property of men he insisted that marriage as an institution should be abolished. Speaking in a women's meeting at Victoria Hall, Madras, in 1948 he attacked the concepts of marriage and family:

The concept of husband-wife relationship has been one of master-slave relationship. The essential philosophy of marriage has been to insist on women's slavery ... why should human beings alone keep such contract of one-man-one-woman relationship ... until women are liberated from such marriages and from men, our country cannot attain independence.<sup>9</sup>

Despite his disapproval of marriage as an institution he approved a certain kind of marriage which transcended the traditional and socially-accepted norms for women. He opposed all ritualistic practices associated with marriages, including the tying of *tali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom which he treated as a symbol of women's subjection to men. He also opposed arranged marriages and advocated that men and women should choose their partners at their own free will.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of woman's chastity, which sustained monogamous family, was another subject of his criticism. In one of his pamphlets entitled *Penn Yean Adimaiyanal?* (Why did women become enslaved?), which was initially written as a series of articles in 1928,

he noted: 'The imposition of 'patrivratha' qualities on women has destroyed their independence and free-thinking and made them unquestioning slaves—to men—who are supposed to demonstrate undue faith over chastity.'<sup>11</sup> He also attacked classical Tamil literary texts such as *Silaparikaram* and *Thirulcural* for preaching chastity as a necessary quality for women.<sup>12</sup> Instead, he suggested polyandry and divorce as solutions for women's oppression. In speeches delivered at various places in 1935 he argued, 'Divorce is a protective instrument in the hands of many oppressed women. Along with Divorce Act there should be a provision for compulsory registration of all marriages.'<sup>13</sup>

According to Periyar, while marriage and chastity were key patriarchal institutions, patriarchy as such was ubiquitous, pervading spheres like language, literature and gender-based socialization. In his writings about women's oppression and in his speeches at self-respect marriages he noted with contempt that the Tamil language did not have words for the male counterpart of adultress and widow.<sup>14</sup> He invented the neologism for widower, *Vidavan* and for male prostitute, *vibacharan* and suggested their use. He also noted that several words are used in Tamil literature and in daily life in derogation of women such as *Aanmai* (masculinity). He wrote,

Women should not forget that the word *aanmai* itself is used in derogation to women. . . As long as *aanmai* will exist, women's slavery will only grow. It is definite that the emancipation of women will not materialise till women themselves destroy the philosophy of *aanmai*. . .<sup>15</sup>

The Tamil language, in his opinion, was 'barbaric', as it did not have 'respectable words for women.'<sup>16</sup> Delivering a speech at Tirupattur in 1946, Periyar strongly criticised Tamil literature for describing women's bodily features at length and ignoring their intellectual faculties. He argued that unless women oppose such a projection of their image in the literature, neither literary traditions nor their own status would change.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from attacking the institutions of patriarchy and condemning its ubiquitous nature, Periyar also underlined its relationship with the control of property.

When people were totally free without property in land, I do not think there were these slavish practices of women's oppression and compulsory marriage contracts. *When there was no concept of accumulating private property . . . there could not have been any compulsion for acquiring heir for the family—property—through child-birth.* Only when the desire for private property came into practice the concept of marriage and imprisoning women to protect the family property also came into practice. Once a woman was made the guardian of man's property, she herself became his



property to produce heir for the family . . . women lost their right to worship their gods but only their husbands. The private property which has been the main reason for women's oppression has to be totally destroyed in order to achieve women's liberation.<sup>18</sup>

In the context of Periyar's view that private property with its need to have inheritors, gave rise to women's subjection in order to produce heirs for property, his advocacy of birth control assumes significance. Arguing that women should have the right to decide to have children, he differentiated his position from the other advocates of birth-control by focussing attention on women's choice: 'There is a basic difference between our insistence on birth-control and other's notion of birth-control. . . They have only thought of family and national welfare through birth-control. But we are only concerned about women's health and women's independence through birth-control.'<sup>19</sup>

Periyar's trenchant criticism of Hinduism was influenced by its role in legitimising patriarchy.<sup>20</sup> While addressing a women audience, he reminded them that the *varanashrama dharma* and Hindu religion had treated them only as *dasis* (prostitutes) of gods who, in turn, tested only women's chastity and not that of men. Ridiculing bigamous gods he said, 'Sisters, you should never perform any rituals to gods who keep two wives and concubines. You must ask the god why he needs two wives and why does he need a marriage every year! How could you worship stones as gods and fall at the feet of Brahmin priests who have legitimised your slavery through religion and rituals?'<sup>21</sup>

Periyar's commitment to the cause of women's emancipation often led him to be critical of his own political comrades. In anguish, he noted, 'The self-proclaimed liberators of women, the Dravidian intellectuals, have kept their daughters, sisters and mothers as mere decorative pieces at home.'<sup>22</sup> He openly condemned the Justice Party ministry, despite his general support to it, for its attitude towards women's question and its failure to effectively implement the anti-child marriage act. Periyar demanded the resignation of A.P. Patro and other Justice Party ministers from the party as they failed to enact any legislation to improve the conditions of women.<sup>23</sup> In his personal life too he was self-critical about his inability to practise his preachings and writings on women's liberation. Writing an emotion-laden obituary of his wife, Nagammal, in *Kudi Arasu* (14 May 1933), he noted, 'I am ashamed to state here that I had not practised even one hundredth of what I wrote and preached about women's emancipation at home with Nagammal'.

Periyar's views on women's question found practical expression in the activities of the Self Respect Movement. The movement, *inter alia*, practised self respect marriages, organised women's conferences to raise their consciousness and to highlight their problems and involved women in mass agitations.

## ACTIVITIES OF SELF RESPECT MOVEMENT

(a) *Marriages*

One of the important activities of the Self Respect Movement which challenged the traditional Hindu marriages and introduced radical changes in them was the conducting of self respect marriages. Self respect marriages were conducted from 1928 onwards among various non-Brahmin castes. These marriages which took place even in the remote villages and were regularly reported in the newspaper of the movement, *Kudi Arasu*, included inter-caste marriages, widow-remarriages and marriages of consent.

The central aim of self respect marriages was to free the institution of marriage from Hindi rituals which emphasised monogamous familial norms and chastity for women and thus legitimised patriarchy.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, these marriages were conducted without Brahmin priests and recitation of religious texts. More significantly they did away with the tying of the *tali*. In keeping with the rationalistic content of the Self Respect Movement, often they were arranged in times which were treated inauspicious by the Hindu calendar (*Rahu Kalam*). Some of the marriages took place at midnight,<sup>25</sup> which is generally considered to be inauspicious time. All these challenged and subverted the religious aura that entrapped the institution of marriage.

We shall give below three such marriages to show how the movement refused to treat marriages as a personal affair and converted them into spectacular political events aimed at breaking the traditional norms of patriarchy.

(1) The self respect marriage between Sivagami, a young widow belonging to an orthodox Hindu family in Thanjavur district and Sami Chidambaranar, a Tamil scholar and a dedicated activist of the movement, took place in 1930. Though Sivagami had given her full consent to marry Chidambaranar, there was stubborn opposition for the marriage from both the families. This forced Periyar to shift the venue of the marriage from Kumbakonam, the town from which Sivagami hailed, to Erode, Periyar's own native town, well known for trading activities.<sup>26</sup>

The marriage which was presided over by E.V.R Nagammal did not have any of the rituals of traditional Hindu marriages, including the tying of *tali*. Speaking at the marriage, Nagammal explained how *tali* and other rituals associated with Hindu marriages symbolised the slavery of women to men. The couple exchanged rings, took an oath which emphasised friendship and equality between them, and addressed each other as comrades and friends instead of the usual 'husband' and 'wife'. And, as if to highlight the political dimension of the marriage, it was arranged in the venue of the Second Self Respect Conference itself.

In the evening, to propagate the need for widow remarriages and self respect marriages, the married couple were taken out in a procession in the streets of Erode by the Self Respect Movement activists. People indeed gathered in large numbers along the route of the procession to watch the iconoclastic couple.<sup>27</sup>

(2) The marriage between Kamalambal and Nallasivan which took place in the same year at Nagercoil near Kanyakumari generated lot of tension among the members of the Saliar caste who were traditional handloom weavers. It was a marriage between a widow and widower, each of them having a child from their previous marriages.<sup>28</sup> The marriage was conducted by Periyar and Nagai Kaliappan<sup>29</sup> in a cinema hall. In the course of the marriage, the bridegroom transferred Rs 5,000 worth of his property to the bride in consonance with the Self Respect Movement's ideal that women should have equal property right as men.

About 2,500 people visited the venue of the marriage to witness the unusual event. While Periyar extolled the virtues of such marriages, A. Ponnambalanar and M. Maragadavalli<sup>30</sup> sang songs of the Self Respect Movement. Pamphlets dealing with the theme of self respect marriages and the stance of the movement on man-woman relationship were distributed to the participants.

(3) The self respect marriage between two activists of the movement, S. Neelavathi and Ramasubramaniam, took place at Pallathur in Ramanathapuram district in 1930. The marriage was attended by about 2,000 male and 500 women activists of the Self Respect Movement. In addition, about 100 local people also participated in it.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, as part of the wedding, the audience were allowed and encouraged to ask questions relating to man-woman relation, marriage, women's emancipation etc. One of the participants asked Periyar why the Self Respect Movement allowed a second marriage. Periyar's response was that marriages could only be tentative arrangements between men and women and they should not be treated as eternal. He further said that men and women should have equal right to marry anyone of their preference even after having first marriage and divorce should be permitted.<sup>32</sup>

The above three cases which were among the several marriages reported in the pages of *Kudi Arasu* give an idea of how the Self Respect Movement politicised marriages and used them as public events to propagate their views on the women's question. That was why marriage venues were decorated with the symbols and slogans of the movement. For instance, the self respect marriage venue in a small village near Cuddalore in 1928 had welcome arches bearing slogans like 'Long Live Self Respect Movement' and 'Long Live Vaikkam Veerar'.<sup>33</sup> The walls inside the marriage hall were adorned with huge posters explaining the objectives and activities of the movement.

Invariably, all these marriages, whether they were held at the house of a lowly Marimuthu belonging to cobbler caste<sup>34</sup> or a political elite like W.P.A. Soundara Pandian,<sup>35</sup> were attended and addressed by activists of the movement—especially by women activists. They spoke on these occasions on themes relating to women's emancipation and demanded legislative protection of women's rights.<sup>36</sup> In an effort to popularise such marriages, Periyar personally attended most of the marriages during the early days of the movement, even if they took place in remote villages.<sup>37</sup>

The Movement organised several thousand such marriages in the Tamil areas during its three decades of political career. For instance, between 1929 and 1932 there were about 8000 self respect marriages were conducted.<sup>38</sup> While certain marriages viewed women's liberation as their aim there were still others which were against Brahmin domination as they dispensed with Brahmin priests and Sanskritic scriptures. An exasperated Periyar, addressing a marriage party in 1931, objected to calling every anti-priest anti-ritual marriage as self respect marriage and said that with time, one of the objectives of the movement should be to do away with marriages themselves.<sup>39</sup> Then, freeing marriages from rituals themselves was no doubt a step ahead.

#### (b) *Conferences*

Another important aspect of the Self Respect Movement was the conferences it organised. These conferences, which were periodically organised both at the provincial and district levels were characterised by slogan-chanting processions, long speeches aimed at propagating the ideology of the movement and passing of resolutions on various political themes. The Self Respect Movement used these conferences as a regular political site to take up women's issues and to encourage women's political participation.

The first provincial Self Respect Conference was held at Chengleput, near Maḍras, in 1929.<sup>40</sup> Apart from articulating its views on themes like Simon Commission, caste oppression and religious institutions, the conference dealt specifically with 'marriage and other rituals.' It demanded that men and women should have the right over property. The Second Provincial Self Respect Conference was held in 1930 at Erode.<sup>41</sup> Within the ambience of this Conference, two other conferences were organised: a youth conference and a women's conference. In the context of organising separate women's conferences, one may note that Periyar passionately believed that women's emancipation would be possible only by the efforts of women. He was critical of man's advocacy of woman's emancipation: 'As of now, men's struggle for women's liberation has only strengthened women's enslavement.'<sup>42</sup> The proceedings of the women's conferences, were fully conducted by women activists and it demanded, *inter alia*, compulsory

education for girls upto the age of 16, effective and immediate implementation of anti-child marriage and divorce acts, equal property right for women, implementation of Devadasi Bill to prevent young girls from being initiated as prostitutes etc.<sup>43</sup> The fact that there was a separate conference of women did not come in the way of the general conference and the youth conference taking up women's issues. The youth conference, for example, appealed that young men should come forward to marry widows and *devadasis* who were willing to marry.<sup>44</sup>

The practice of having a separate women's conference along with every major self respect conference became a permanent feature of the movement in the subsequent years. The Second Women's Conference held at Virudunagar in 1931 increased its demands. It also argued that women should not be recruited only for professions like teaching and medicine, but should be inducted even into the army and police; and it called for powers to the local magistrates to identify those temples which encouraged *devadasi* system.<sup>45</sup>

While special women's conferences provided an exclusive space for women activists of the Self Respect Movement to articulate themselves on women's issues, their participation in general conferences was also substantial. That is women were not 'ghettoised' within the movement. Often the much honoured role of delivering the inaugural addresses of conferences fell on the shoulders of women activists. To cite a few instances: in 1931, Indrani Balasubramanian inaugurated the Third Self Respect Conference at Virudunagar;<sup>46</sup> in 1932, T.S. Kunchidam inaugurated the Tanjavur District Self Respect Conference;<sup>47</sup> in 1933, S. Neelavathi inaugurated the Third Tanjavur District Self Respect Conference; in 1934, R. Annapurani inaugurated the Tiruchenkod Taluk Adi Dravida Conference;<sup>48</sup> in 1937, Meenambal Sivaraj presided over the Tinnelveli District Third Adi Dravida Conference;<sup>49</sup> and in 1938 the Madurai Self Respect Conference was inaugurated by Rajammal.<sup>50</sup> In the course of the inaugural addresses, these women speakers discussed the various aspects of the women's question. This participation was of Periyar's efforts to break the culture of silence which influenced the women activists of the movement: he insisted that even the most inarticulate women activists should utter at least a few words in the women's conference.<sup>51</sup> The success of these self respect conferences in politicising women can be summarised in the following words of Singaravelu Chettiar:<sup>52</sup>

Women who have been confined to the kitchen are speaking today from public platforms; they are debating about public issues; they are involved in social work as equals of men: the credit for facilitating all these goes to Periyar.

It is rare to find women in other movements who are as skilled in public oratory as they are in this movement. During the last fifty

years, the Indian National Congress could produce only one Sarojini Naidu.

. . . What an ability women belonging to the Self Respect Movement have in organising their own conferences—independently and with true equality. In other movements, women figure only as an adjunct to men's activities; but in our movement, they function as an independent group and involve in—the movement's—activities demonstrating equality with men.<sup>53</sup>

It was the conference of the Progressive Women's Association, held in Madras in 1938 that bestowed the honorific title *Periyar* (The Great One) on E.V. Ramasamy 'for his unparalleled activism to transform the South Indian Society.'<sup>54</sup> This title became the short-hand for his name all through his life and after.

Some leading women activists were elected to the Central Council of the organising committee of Tamilnadu provincial conference through the conference every year. For instance, at the Third Provincial Conference at Virudhunagar in 1931, Indirani Balasubramaniam was elected as council member. When the Samadharma Party conference was held at Erode in 1933, S. Neelavathi and K. Kunchidam were elected as Propaganda Secretaries to establish the Self Respect League in villages. Few other women like R. Annapurani, and Ramamirtham Ammal, were chosen as district and inter-district Samadharma propagandists.<sup>55</sup>

The women members of the Self Respect Movement not only participated in the non-agitational programmes of the movement like conferences, but also quite actively in mass agitations. The most significant mass agitation launched by the movement during the period of our study was the anti-Hindi agitation which continued for over two years, from late 1937 to early 1940. The agitation forced the Congress ministry headed by C. Rajagopalachari to reverse its decision to introduce Hindi as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum.

During the initial phase of the agitation, women members of the movement actively participated in processions and meetings. Women clad in sarees with the Tamil flag<sup>56</sup> printed on them and chanting anti-Hindi and pro-Tamil slogans were a distinct feature of these processions and public meetings.<sup>57</sup> The meetings were also addressed by women activists. For instance a huge public meeting organised at the Triplicane beach in Madras on 11 September 1938 to receive a symbolic Tamil army, which marched by foot from Trichinopoly district to Madras propagating anti-Hindi message; was addressed by not less than four women activists; Ramamirtham Ammaiyar, Narayani Ammaiyar, Va.ba.Thamaraikanni Ammaiyar, Munnagara Azhagiyar.<sup>58</sup> Also, the women activists organised farewell committees to see off their male comrades to prison.<sup>59</sup>

With the agitation gaining strength over time, batches of women activists courted arrest. The first batch of five women consisting of Dr. Dharmambal, Ramamirtham Ammaiyar, Malar Mugathammaiyyar, Pattammal and Seethammal were arrested on 14 November 1938, in Madras.<sup>60</sup> Wearing sarees printed with the Tamil flag and singing Bharathidasan's evocative song calling for a Tamil army to save the language, they were led in a procession from Kasi Visvanathan Temple in Pethu Nayakkan Pettai to Hindu Theological School. On the route of the procession they were stopped at various points and garlanded. For picketing the school, they were arrested and imprisoned for six weeks.<sup>61</sup> Though the judge offered them the option of paying a fine of Rs 50 or undergoing 6 weeks imprisonment, they chose the latter.

From then onwards women activists of the movement courted arrest with different intervals, till September 1939 when the last batch of five women were arrested. In total, 73 women were arrested and jailed for their involvement in the anti-Hindi agitation. Significantly, several of them went to jail with their children; thirty two children accompanying their mothers to jail.<sup>62</sup> An exasperated member of the Congress ministry, commented that women were getting arrested to get milk for their children in the jail! The Madras provincial women's conference held at Vellore in 1938, demanded that the minister concerned take back his comment and offer an unconditional apology.<sup>63</sup> The Self Respect Movement's newspaper *Kudi Arasu* prominently reported the women's involvement in the agitation and published transcript of the arguments they had in the court and their photographs. And Periyar himself was arrested during the agitation on the charge of inciting women to fill the jails.

In concluding this section, we shall cite an exchange that took place between a woman activist of the Self Respect Movement, arrested for participating in the anti-Hindi agitation, and a prosecuting Inspector in a Madras Court:

*Prosecuting Inspector:* You are with your small children, prison is painful and your husband will suffer. If you promise you will not do similar things in future (i.e., participating in such agitations), we shall pardon you.

*Women activist:* . . . We are willing to bear any suffering for the progress of our language, our nation. *Our husbands have no right to interfere in this.* They are not the ones to do so.<sup>64</sup>

#### WOMEN ACTIVISTS AND THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS

##### *A Case Study*

The Self Respect Movement, as we have seen, had provided space for the encouraged political activism among women. To explore how far the movement had succeeded in raising the consciousness of women about their own plight, one needs to construct case histories of these

women activists. We shall provide below the portrait of an extraordinary woman who began her life as a *devadasi*<sup>65</sup>, but transformed herself, over the years, to become a front ranking participant in the Self Respect Movement.

Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar was born in 1883 in the Isai Vellalar caste, one of the caste from which *devadasis* were drawn. She was brought up in a *devadasi* family at the small village of Moovalur in Thanjavur district, and was initiated into the *devadasi* system at a young age. Writing in *Kudi Arasu* in 1925, she noted, 'I was born in a traditional non-*devadasi* family. . . My uncle and aunt persuaded my father to force me into prostitution, through the *devadasi* custom. They also advised not to marry me away, since I would fetch a handsome amount for the family through the profession, given my talents in music and dance. . . . So my parents forced me into this custom. It was during this time, I deeply thought about this custom as evil and read those religious texts which advocated it. I felt that men have forced certain women into this degrading profession to pursue their indiscreet pleasures and for selfish reasons.'<sup>66</sup> This awareness led her to walk out of the despicable *devadasi* life and marry a musician Suyambu Pillai on her own accord. This marriage created furore in her community and resulted in her being ostracised.<sup>67</sup>

Ramamirtham Ammaiyar began her political career in the Indian National Congress. As a Congress activist, her full energy was expended in tackling the question of women's position in Tamil society especially that of *devadasis*. In her words: 'I have been struggling for the past seven or eight years to abolish this *devadasi* custom. I have also organised a conference to reform our women and break the *devadasi* system. Without invitations, I barged into houses, where marriages were held, to advocate simple marriages and to expose the evils of *devadasi* system. I have forced women to keep the promise of discouraging their fellow women from becoming *devadasis*. Some men have been constantly campaigning against my battle against the system. . . . They are threatening . . . that they would smash my skull if I preach in marriages against the *devadasi* system'.<sup>68</sup>

From her writings, it is not clear why she left the Congress to join the Self Respect Movement. However, it is only evident that her break with the Congress which occurred during mid-1920s was sharp and complete. In 1956, while remembering her involvement in the Self Respect Movement, she wrote, 'once Gandhi had written to me a letter appreciating my efforts towards *devadasi* abolition. I used to worship that letter. After I left the Congress, not only that letter, even Gandhi had got erased from my mind.'<sup>69</sup> One may note here that Ramamirtham Ammaiyar met Gandhi in 1921, during his visit to Mayuram and this meeting gave added fillip to her activism in the Congress.<sup>70</sup>



In the course of her political career in the Self Respect Movement, she acted as a relentless political campaigner against women's slavery. As a full-time activist of the movement, she addressed various conferences of the movement and elaborated how Hinduism and upper caste men were legitimising women's slavery.<sup>71</sup> She arranged and addressed several self respect marriages in different places, and one such significant marriage arranged by Ramamirtham was the widow-remarriage of Sivagami and Chidambaranar, which we have earlier described in some detail.<sup>72</sup> During the anti-Hindi agitation in 1938, she propagated the anti-Hindi message through a *padayatra* from Trichi to Madras and was arrested. This *padayatra* started on 1 August 1938 from Uraiyur (Trichy), covered around 577 miles and reached Madras after 42 days. During the *padayatra* about 87 public meetings were addressed by the group.<sup>73</sup>

Significantly, Ramamirtham Ammaiyar authored essays regularly in *Kudi Arasu* on the condition of women. Here one may note that Ramamirtham Ammaiyar had informal education only upto Third Standard. In 1936, she published a voluminous novel in Tamil running into 303 pages, with the title *Tasikalin Mosavalai Allathu Matipettra Mainer* (The treacherous net of the Dasis or a minor grown wise).<sup>74</sup> The novel, which did not follow the tradition of Tamil literary style however remained an interesting document since 'it is based on personal experiences of the authoress who after all was a professional dasi herself.'<sup>75</sup> It dealt with how two *devadasi* sisters who were exploited by wealthy men walked out of the profession and organised *Devadasigal Munnetra Sangam* (Federation of the Progress of Devadasis) to abolish the system. This semi-autobiographical novel carried a poignant and political preface in which she wrote,

My strong opinion is that from the ancient time the temple priests, kings and the landlords, . . . in the name of art, had encouraged particular communities to indulge in prostitution.

. . . These days more than the Kumbakonam Shastris, Satyamurthy Shastri have been making noise about preserving the Devadasi custom.

. . . Our women have been suppressed in all spheres. The legitimisation of the suppression given through religion and *shastras* is evident in the manner in which women have been assigned the role of prostitutes. Through '*Potarrupu Sangam*' I propagated the anti-devadasi message for which among the Devadasi community itself there were opposition. Prominent religious heads, Devadasi agents, reform leaders—everybody openly opposed my stand. . . . Then I decided that it is easy to oppose imperialism and Brahminism but not the Devadasi System.<sup>76</sup>

Another fictional serial that Ramamirtham Ammaiyar wrote in *Dravida Nadu* in 1945, *Damayanthi*, also deals with the question of

*devadasis*. The woman protagonist in the novel breaks out of the *devadasi* system and becomes a teacher and accuses religious texts of imposing the practice of prostitution on a section of women and questions the rationale of God's carnal desires to have women as *dasis*. Through the narrative, she also attacked untouchability and the economic exploitation of the poor by the rich.<sup>77</sup>

An irrepressible activist and a writer, Ramamirtham Ammaiyar finally quit the Dravida Kazhagam (which was the new name the Self Respect Movement acquired in 1944) in 1949 to join the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam founded by C.N. Annadurai along with others. The reason for her quitting the movement was significant; she did not approve of and openly criticised Periyar's decision to marry a 20-year old young woman when he was sixty.<sup>78</sup>

The tale of Ramamirtham Ammaiyar was indeed extraordinary. From being a *devadasi*, she became a foremost champion of women's cause in Tamil areas. Her commitment to the cause made her disagree with and break away from Periyar despite two decades of comradeship between them. Ramamirtham Ammaiyar does not represent an 'average' woman activist of the Self Respect Movement, but one who marked the outer limit to which a woman activist of the movement could reach out.

#### WOMEN'S QUESTION: TWO APPROACHES—THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE SELF RESPECT MOVEMENT

The radical content of the Self Respect Movement's approach to the women's question can be fully understood only when we compare it with other contemporary political movements. The most important political movement which was contemporary to the Self Respect Movement was, of course, the nationalist movement. For lack of space, we shall present below a synoptic view of how the nationalist movement 'resolved' the women's question, and compare it with the Self Respect Movement.

In a recent paper, Partha Chatterjee has shown that the nationalist movement resolved the women's question by reworking and reaffirming the pre-existing patriarchal structure. The nationalists, while approving of imitating and incorporating the material culture of the west argued that adopting the west in aspects which were spiritual or anything other than the material sphere of western civilization would threaten the self-identity of the national culture itself. As an extension of this position, they located home as the site to retain the 'inner spirituality of indigenous life' and women as the agents responsible for that. It was advocated that women could meet this responsibility of preserving the spiritual core of the national culture through 'chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience and the labour of love.' Only within this 'new patriarchy' the nationalist movement attempted all its reforms related to women. As long as women demonstrated these so-called feminine/spiritual

qualities, 'they could go to school, travel in public conveyance, watch public entertainment programmes and in time even take up employment outside home.'<sup>79</sup>

The nationalist movement mobilised women in the anti-colonial struggle—especially from 1920 onwards—only within the framework of this new patriarchy. The traditional feminine roles such as nurturing mother, obedient daughter, god-fearing chaste wife who would never defy the husband were extended to the public realm to expand women's participation outside.<sup>80</sup> While Abadi Banu Begam had to appear in public platforms by presenting herself as a mother by invoking her maternal nickname 'Bi Amman',<sup>81</sup> the Calcutta prostitutes' support to the non-cooperation movement came under fire from the nationalist intelligentsia.<sup>82</sup>

In illustrating how the nationalists in the Tamil-speaking areas addressed the women's question, one may begin with the views of Thiruvi Kalyanasundaram, an activist in the national movement and a Tamil writer who enjoyed a pan-Tamil appeal despite his nationalist politics. In one of his earliest and a very popular book *Penin Perumai*<sup>83</sup> ('Women's Pride', 1927), he defined femininity as encapsulating patience, endurance, sacrifice, selflessness, beauty and love, and essentialised femininity as motherhood. According to him, all women were created to be mothers and they should be worshipped since they were the procrators as well as the transmitters of moral values to the new generation of children. Opposing western-type of education, he suggested that girls should be provided with education that would ingrain in them traditional moral and religious values and train them if such household duties as hushing and pounding of rice, tailoring etc.

Muthulakshmi Reddi, another nationalist who took up the women's cause through her activities in the Women's India Association, is much remembered for her campaign against the Devadasi system. Significantly, her opposition to the Devadasi system stemmed from her view that it stood in the way of women being chaste wives. Similarly, she held conservative views on the question of contraception—despite being a medical practitioner. She did not perceive the link between contraception and women's freedom and could only advocate—rather reluctantly—the Gandhian ideal of self-control or Brahmachariya as a means of contraception.<sup>84</sup>

Such tendencies were even more acute in the case of other nationalist leaders such as C. Rajagopalachari and S. Satyamurthy. When Muthulakshmi Reddy initiated the debate on *devadasi* abolition, Rajagopalachari, as the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee refused to take up the issue for discussion.<sup>85</sup> Satyamurthy on the other hand, went to the extent of claiming that the *devadasis* represented national art and culture and hence the system should be retained and every *devadasi* should dedicate at least one girl to be a future *devadasi*.<sup>86</sup> In the same vein, he also vehemently opposed the

Child-marriage Restraint Act, on the ground that it would hurt the sentiments of the Hindus.<sup>87</sup>

Thus the nationalists failed to develop a critique of the institution of patriarchy and rather valorised patriarchy as a necessity. It is only too evident that the position of the Self Respect Movement on the women's question was in sharp contrast to that of the nationalist movement. The institutions of patriarchy like family, marriage and chastity, which were defended by the nationalist movement, were called into question by Periyar and his followers. They programmatically attempted to challenge these institutions through means like Self Respect Marriages. In short while the nationalists preserved patriarchy the mobilising women for politics, the Self Respect Movement mobilised them to contest patriarchy.

In saying this, however, we do not imply that the spread of anti-patriarchal consciousness among the followers of the Self Respect Movement was even. It is indeed true that the movement quite clearly exhibited patriarchal consciousness in its functioning, especially during its later phase. One can cite several illustrations towards this; while in the early phase of the movement both men and women were addressed by a single word 'Thozhar' (comrade), with the formation of the Dravida Kazhagam in 1944 women activists were rechristened as 'mothers and sisters'; in the public meetings and conferences during the anti-Hindi agitation, women activists were introduced in terms of the achievements of their fathers and husbands; during the same agitation, women activists themselves likened Tamil language to a chaste woman like Kannagi and called for women's participation to protect the chastity of the Tamil language;<sup>88</sup> and the Dravida Kazhagam's aims and objectives stated in the Trichinopoly conference in 1945 did not have any specific reference to women's issues, but for calling them to participate in the party activities.<sup>89</sup>

These examples go to show that, while the Self Respect Movement challenged patriarchy, it failed to create a new anti-patriarchal consciousness even among its own followers. The old regressive ideas carrying patriarchal values was dormant within the movement and asserted itself when given the opportunity to arise.

[I am grateful to Professor K.N. Panikkar, Biswamoy Pati, Padmini Swaminathan, K. Chandhu, Karunakaran, Meera V. and Anna Chandy for their insightful comments on an earlier draft.]

## NOTES

1. The Self Respect Movement is only one phase of the Dravidian Movement and the present paper deals with only this phase. In its subsequent incarnations, it has taken the forms of Dravida Kazhagam, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.  
For some of the non-Marxist studies on the movement, see: Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., *The Dravidian Movement*, Bombay, 1965; Eugene Irschick, *The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, California, 1969; Margurite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton, 1976.  
For the Marxist studies, see:  
N. Ram, 'Dravidian Movement in its pre-independence Phases,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, Vol. XIV, No. 7 and 8, February 1979; P. Ramamurthy, *Ariya Mayaiya? Dravida Mayaiya? Viduthalai Porum Dravida Iyakkamum*, Madras, 1987, (in Tamil).
2. N. Ram, *op. cit.*; Arulalam, 'The Relevance of Periyar: Caste or Class Struggle?' *The Radical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May 1971.
3. A brief obituary of Periyar published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 12 January 1974, succinctly brings out his life-long commitment to the women's cause: 'He championed the cause of widow-remarriage, of marriages based on consent, and of women's right to divorce and abortion. Pointing out that there was no Tamil word for the male counterpart of an adultress, he fumed, '... the word adultress implies man's conception of woman as a slave, a commodity to be sold and hired.' Periyar's demand at a conference two years ago that no odium should be attached to a woman who desired a man other than her husband (which the press so avidly vulgarised), as well as Periyar's advocacy of the abolition of marriage as the only way of freeing women from enslavement, were about as radical as the views of any women liberationist.'
4. In the recent past there have been conscious attempts made by historians to write women's history by amassing different kinds of source materials to make women visible in history. For the importance of the need for writing women's history, see: Elizabeth Fox-Genovesse, 'Placing Women's History in History,' *New Left Review*, No. 133, May-June 1982.
5. E.V. Ramasamy Naicker or Periyar, a Balija Naidu from Erode, started his early life as a merchant, later as a Municipal Council Chairman of Erode, and then as a local Congress leader. In 1920 he became an ardent non-co-operationist, propagating khadi and anti-liquor activities. In 1924 he became the leader of Vaikom-Satyagraha and was twice arrested. In 1925, after his confrontation with the local Congress leaders at the Conjeevaram conference he openly criticised Congress for not showing interest in the welfare of the non-Brahmins. Finally in 1927 he left the Congress for good and began the self respect movement.
6. Siddars were iconoclastic mystic poets who represented a movement of revolt against temple worship, casteism and Brahmin priesthood. Their period was 10 to 15 A.D. Ramanujam was a socio-religious reformer of the 12th Century A.D.
7. *Kudi Arasu*, 26 November 1928 (emphasis mine).
8. *Ibid.*, 10 January 1948; 21 September 1946.
9. *Viduthalai*, 11 October 1948.
10. Periyar had delivered numerous speeches and had written extensively in the party newspapers, expressing the above views. To cite only some instance:  
*Kudi Arasu*, 22 December 1929, 20 September 1931, 29 September 1940, 17 November 1940, 24 November 1945; *Pagutharivu*, 1 April 1936; *Pagutharivu*, 7 October 1937; *Puratchi*, 17 July 1934.
11. E.V. Ramasamy, *Pen Yean Adimaiyanal?* (Why did women become enslaved?) Erode, 1942, pp. 11-16.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 16-25.
13. *Kudi Arasu*, 16 July 1935; 26 December 1929. *Viduthalai*, 24 October 1948.
14. *Kudi Arasu*, 26 October 1930, 21 September 1930 and E.V. Ramasamy, *Pen Yean Adimaiyanal?* *op. cit.*, p. 48,
15. *Kudi Arasu*, 12 August 1928.
16. Charles Ryerson, *Regionalism and Religion, The Tamil Renaissance and Popular Hinduism*, Madras, 1988, p. 100.

17. *Kudi Arasu*, 21 September 1946.
18. *Viduthalai*, 11 October 1948, (emphasis mine).
19. *Kudi Arasu*, 14 December 1930, 1 March 1931 and 6 April 1931, and *Pen Year Adimaiyanal?* *op. cit.*, p.
20. *Ibid.* 22 December 1929.
21. *Ibid.*, 5 July 1948.
22. *Ibid.*, 21 September 1946; see also E.V. Ramasamy, *Pen Year Adimaiyanal?* *op. cit.*, p. 62; E.V. Ramasamy, *Vazhkai Thunai Nalam*, Madras, 1977, p. 35.
23. *Kudi Arasu*, 23 September 1928; 29 December 1929.
24. We come across one Self Respect marriage in which the couples were Muslims. Hajurulla Mohaideen married Kameeja Begam in 1936 without any religious rites and the bride did not wear the customary purdah during the marriage. See, *Kudi Arasu*, 16 February 1936.
25. Sami Chidambaranar, *Tamilar Thalaivar* (leader of the Tamils), Madras, 1983, pp. 118–119.
26. Interview with Sivagami Chidambaranar, Madras, 5 April, 1989.
27. *Kudi Arasu*, 11 May 1930.
28. *Ibid.*, 14 September 1930.
29. Nagai Kallippan was one of leading propagandists in the movement who travelled to Burma and Malaysia to propagate the movement's ideals among the overseas Tamils.
30. A. Ponnambalanar was a prominent intellectual who wrote frequently in *Kudi Arasu*. M. Maragadavalli was the editor of the journal, *Madhar Marumanam* (widow-remarriage), published from Karaikudi during the mid 1930s.
31. S.A.K.K. Raju, *Neelavathi Ramasubramaniam Vazhkai Varalaru* (The Life history of Neelavathi Ramasubramaniam), 1983, pp. 14–57.
32. *Kudi Arasu*, 12 October 1930.
33. *Kudi Arasu*, 23 December 1928. Periyar was called *Vaikom Veerar* because of his leadership in the Vaikom Satyagraha (Temple-entry Movement) in 1924.
34. The self respect marriage between Marimathu and Thaiyammal took place on 20 April 1930 at Coimbatore. See, *Kudi Arasu*, 27 April 1930.
35. W.P.A. Soundara Pandian, one of the leading activists in the movement during the 1930s, conducted widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages among the Nadars.
36. For instance see, *Kudi Arasu*, 25 December 1932.
37. Sami Chidambaranar, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
38. E.Sa. Viswanathan, *The Political Career of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker*, Madras, 1983, p. 99.
39. *Kudi Arasu*, 21 June 1931.
40. K. Veeramani (ed.), *Namadu Kurikkol* (Our Objectives), Madras, 1982, pp. 5–12.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 13 and 16–21.
42. Sami Chidambaranar, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
43. *Kudi Arasu*, 18 May 1930.
44. K. Veeramani (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 17.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26; *Kudi Arasu*, 16 August 1931.
46. *Kudi Arasu*, 16 August 1931.
47. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1932.
48. *Ibid.*, 9 April 1933.
49. *Ibid.*, 27 May 1934.
50. *Ibid.*, 7 February 1937.
51. Interview with Rajammal Vasudevan, Darasuram, 21 November 1988.
52. Singaravelu Chettiar, a leading activist of the Self Respect Movement in the 1930s, initiated the Self Respect League and started the Samadharma Party along with Periyar.
53. Singaravelu Chettiar quoted by C.V.K. Amirthavalliar in her speech made at Kuala Lumpur. See, *Kudi Arasu*, 20 October 1940.
54. *Kudi Arasu*, 28 December 1938.
55. Under Secretary Safe Secret file, 16 October 1934, Appendix B, Appendix H, pp. 20, 45–48.
56. The Tamil Flag carried the symbols of the three ancient kingdoms, i.e. Chera, Chola and pandias.
57. Sami Chidambaranar, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

58. Illancheliyan, *Tamilar Thodutha Por* (The War Waged by Tamils), Madras, n.d., pp. 118-19.
59. See for example, *Kudi Arasu*, 18 September 1938.
60. Ibid., 20 November 1938.
61. Illancheliyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-9.
62. Ibid., pp. 148-50.
63. *Kudi Arasu*, 28 December 1938.
64. Ibid., 20 November 1938 (emphasis mine).
65. Devadasis were young girls dedicated, by custom, to temples and treated as wedded to the God. In practice, these girls, who were often trained in music and dance, were used as concubines by upper-caste men.
66. *Kudi Arasu*, 13 December 1925.
67. Interview with Mr. C. Selvaraj, (The grandson of Ramamirtham Ammaiyar), Madras, 13 July 1989.
68. *Kudi Arasu*, 13 December 1925.
69. *Murasoli*, Pongal Malar, January 1956, p. 52.
70. Interview with Mr. C. Selvaraj, *op. cit.*
71. For instance see, *Kudi Arasu*, 10 September 1933.
72. Interview with Sivagami Chidambaranar, Madras, 5 April 1989.
73. Iryanan, *Suyamariyadai Chudoroligal* (Shining Stars of Self Respect Movement), Madras, p. 60; Illanchelian, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-120.
74. Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammal, *Tasikalin Mosavalai Allathu Matipettra Mainar* (The Treacherous net of the Dasis or a Minor grown wise), Madras, 1936.
75. Kamil V. Zvelebil, 'A Devadasi as the author of a Tamil Novel,' *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies*, September, 1987, p. 155.
76. Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammal, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4. S. Satyamurthi was the then minister in the Congress legislature who strongly opposed the legislation against the Devadasi system.
77. *Dravida Nādu*, 22 and 29 April 1945; 13 May 1945.
78. Interview with Mr. C. Selvaraj, *op. cit.*
79. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question*, Occasional Paper No. 94, Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.
80. For an elaboration of this argument with instances, see, Gail Minault, 'The Extended family as Metaphor and the Expansion of women's Realm' in Gail Minault, ed., *The Extended Family, Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, Delhi, 1981.
81. Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p. 11.  
Writing about Nationalist Movement, Partha Chatterjee notes, 'In fact the image of women as Goddess or mother served to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home' (See, Partha Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 20).
82. Sandip Bandyopadhyay, 'The 'fallen' and Non-cooperation,' *Manushi*, July-August, 1989.
83. Thiru V. Kalyasundaranar, *Penin Perumai Allathu Vazkai Thunai*, Madras, 1986 (later edition).
84. Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Embattled Advocates: The debate over Birth Control in India, 1920-1940', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1989.
85. Muthulakshmi Reddy papers, Subject file No. 11, Part II.
86. Muthulakshmi Reddy's letter to the editor of *Tamilnadu* (a Tamil newspaper) in Reddy papers, Subject file No. 12, Part II, p. 79.
87. Swadesamitran, 28 November 1928. A leading Congress activist Salem C. Vijayaraghavachariyar got his daughter, who had not yet attained puberty, hurriedly married, before the child marriage Restraint Act could be enforced. See, C.S. Lakshmi, *The Face behind the Mask, Women in Tamil Literature*, p. 22, Delhi, 1984.
88. For instance see, V.B. Thamarakkanni's speech at Madras Tamil Women Conference in 1938. Illanchelian, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
89. K. Veeramani (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 51-64.

M. V. SHOBHANA\*

## *Condition of Women Workers in Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore, 1914-1939.*

The choice of the subject, the woman worker, is based on the need to investigate the nature of her oppression, both as a woman and as a worker, the premise being that the woman becoming a worker and a worker being woman face a number of problems which are dissimilar to those confronting her male counterparts. The specific case studied here is of women textile workers in Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore during the years between the first and the second World Wars. The focus of this essay is the consciousness of women workers and the forms in which this was articulated. For this, various protest actions by women workers such as for higher wages, against sexual harassment and for better conditions of work at the mill are taken up for examination. Both organised actions through unions and spontaneous protests and strikes have been dealt with.

### BACKGROUND

Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore were the foci of industrial development in the Madras Presidency. In these centres, the main industrial activity was the production of cotton yarn and cloth. The number of cotton mills in Madras Presidency in 1911-12 was fourteen, with a total number of 386,424 spindles and employees numbering 22,489 on an average.<sup>1</sup> By 1937, there were forty seven cotton mills and 11,34,122 spindles and 5,866 looms.<sup>2</sup> The total employment in the cotton mills in the three major cities grew from 15,963 in 1913-14 to 45,803 in 1936-37.<sup>3</sup>

This growth was challenged by free, in fact, unfair competition from Japanese yarns and textiles, superior in quality because of better technology and, more importantly, available at cheaper rates.<sup>4</sup> The price advantage enjoyed by imports could be credited largely to the British policy followed during the period of not only not granting pro-

---

\* Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



tection to the colony's textile industry but also overvaluing the rupee. Only after the severe years of the Dépression had passed did the British begin to give Indian industry some protection, as an outcome of which a number of mill owners had to adopt measures to economise production by way of technological innovation, wage cut, retrenchment of 'excess' labour and, sometimes, cut in production.<sup>5</sup>

In Madras Presidency, the labour for the industries was drawn from the villages circumscribing the towns.<sup>6</sup> The workers maintained a live contact with their villages. In times of crisis, the workers could go back to the villages to find work in the agricultural sector.<sup>7</sup> Ties of caste, clan and religion were carried to the *cheris* in which these workers lived. These factors of identity and kinship were manipulated by the management during strikes.<sup>8</sup>

Our period of discussion, 1914-1939, was a phase of growing strength of the national liberation movement. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the Congress, especially Gandhi, had realised the need to mobilise the immense potential existing in Indian women.<sup>9</sup> Middle class women's organisations under the leadership of Annie Besant took up various issues to pursue amelioration of the conditions of women in Madras. As we shall see, these middle class organisations at times were also involved in resolving women workers' problems.

#### WOMEN AT THE WORKPLACE

Women had access to work, but proportionately less than had men. As shown in Table I, we find that whereas the total number of employees in the cotton mills of the three cities under review increased by 187% during 1913-1937, the number of women employees, (excluding adolescents) increased by 581%. (see Table I).

The share of women rose from 8.3% in 1913-14 to 19.7% in 1936-37. This was below the share of women in the total industrial workforce in Madras Presidency, which, in 1936 stood at 25.8% (See Table II).

There was distinct disparity between male and female workers as regards the kinds of work they were assigned. Women were given lowly paid jobs in the mills as reelers, winders and wastepickers. Other work came rarely to them.

Correspondingly, women were given wages lower than those received by their male counterparts. According to K.R.R. Sastry's Report to the Indian Economic Enquiry Commission in 1925, in Madurai, male mill workers received between Rs 18-12-0 and Rs 37-8-0 per month whereas female workers received between Rs 9-6-0 and Rs 16-4-0 per month.<sup>10</sup> A comparison of the wages of male and female workers in the cotton mills under review is given in Table III below.

A survey conducted by the Women's Indian Association of Madras in 1926 revealed that most of the women workers were indebted. Of the twenty-three women examined in the B & C Mills of Madras, only one woman was out of debt. Of the remaining twenty-two, five had borrow-

Table I  
Composition of workers in Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills—1913-14 and 1936-37

	1913-14					1936-37				
	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total
	Adult	Adole- scent	Adult	Adole- scent		Adult	Adole- scent	Adult	Adole- scent	
Coimbatore	1644	-	560	-	401	13386	2645	5506	520	196
Madras	9582	-	489	-	1905	9711	531	174	-	844
Madurai	715	-	274	-	393	7308	595	3326	258	1303
Total	11941	-	1323	-	2699	30405	3271	9006	778	2343
					15963					45803

Source: 1913-14—Judicial, July 24, 1914, N.A.I.  
1936-37—Development Department, G.O. 1455-57, 29.6.1937.

Table II  
Number of Operatives in Factories of Madras Presidency Falling Under the IFA, 1911

Year	Total No. of operatives	of which		
		Women	Boys	Girls
1912	-	8587	4557	1152
1913	-	13264	4223	1777
1914	-	14176	4488	1926
1915	-	13591	4277	1805
1916	-	15799	4818	2577
1920	-	17523	5432	2822
1921	95294	18938	4569	2478
1922	-	20356	4775	2549
1923	-	23101	4485	2322
1924	-	25429	4722	2390
1925	-	26884	4006	2422
1926	127411	27096	3746	2095
1927	134074	30860	4253	2455
1928	136973	32095	4091	2275
1929	143217	35036	4319	2328
1930	142549	34982	4269	2086
1931	137377	33761	4094	2388
1932	132960	33212	6246	
1933	137775	34189	6235	
1934	146779	37195	6312	
1935	162745	39655	6495	
1936	170800	44115	8141	

Source: 1912-1916—Dept. of Commerce and Industry, F-April 1-17 Part B, 1918.

1916-24—Development Dept. G.O. 880, 17.6.1925.

1925-28—Public Works and Labour Dept. G.O. 32IL, 1.2.1930.

1929-1931—Development Dept. G.O. 886, 2.7.1932.

1932-1936—Development Dept. G.O. 1455-57, 29.6.1937.

ed at 25% rate of interest, nine at 75% rate of interest and eight at 150% rate of interest.<sup>11</sup> The survey also found that the living as well as the working conditions of the women were primitive, with no sanitary arrangements, rest house or room to feed the children.

Women were employed for long hours between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. Their hardship was aggravated by the practice whereby children and women not infrequently remained in the mill, until such time when their relations were free to accompany them to their homes. This was because popular feeling was against the practice of permitting women to go out alone at night.<sup>12</sup> Its outcome was that the total period of

Table III  
Monthly Wages in the Cotton Textile Industry of Madras Presidency (Rs. Anna. Paise)

Year	Category of Workers	Madras		Madurai		Coimbatore	
		Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.
1906	Coolies	7	4	—	—	—	—
1908	Coolies	7	4	7	4-12	—	—
1910	Coolies	7	5	7	4	7	4
	Weavers	20	—	—	—	—	—
	Spinners	8	—	—	—	6.8.0	—
1912	Coolies	7	5	9	4	7	4
1918	Roving dept	8-12	—	—	—	—	—
	Unspecified	—	7-9	—	—	—	—
1921	Coolies	8-12	6-8	—	—	—	—
1926	Reelers	—	18	—	—	—	—
1928	Spinners	—	—	—	—	19	12
1934	Reelers	—	—	—	—	—	9.6.0
1937	Spinners	—	—	—	—	11.8-18	11-13
	Wastepickers	—	—	—	—	—	6
	Reelers	—	—	—	—	—	7
	Winding	—	—	—	—	9	7
1938	Unskilled	—	—	—	—	11	7.8
	Reeler	27.100	16.8.0	—	15	—	8.5.0-14.5.0
	Ring frame	—	—	—	—	—	16.2.11-14.12.7
	Spinners	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source:

- 1906: Progress No. 15, 1906 Commerce and Industry (Factories) N.A.I.  
 1908: G.O. 1034, Commerce and Industry (Judicial), July 29, N.A.I.  
 1910: 1193 Commerce and Industry (Factories), 6 August, N.A.I.  
 1912: Progress No. 1-14, (A) Commerce and Industry (Factories) November, N.A.I.  
 1918: *The Hindu*, 'Choolai hands their grievances,' Enclosure June 28, Hindu Library, Madras.  
 1921: R.C. Gupta; Labour and Housing in India, 1925, p. 86-87.  
 1926: L-878 (16), Department of Industry and Commerce (Labour), N.A.I.  
 1928: R.C.L. V-VII Madras Presidency, pp. 243 & 327, London 1930.  
 1934: 2507 L, Public Works and Labour, 20-11-1935, T.N.A.  
 1937: Development department, 2711, 6-12-1937, T.N.A.  
 1938: Dev. Dept. 2059, 23-8-1938, I.N.A. and Report on Coimbatore Mills Strike 1938, pp. 103, 182, 187, Madras Museum Library.

absence from the home for the women was between 14 to 14 1/2 hours.<sup>13</sup> After this, women had innumerable domestic duties to perform. So much so that the Indian Factory Commission felt that it would be in the interest of the women workers' health as also the health of the workers at large to let women off a little earlier, because then they would be able to discharge their domestic chores better.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, the various pieces of legislation enacted by the colonial state between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the second world war sought to bring some betterment in the conditions of work of the workers in general and women workers in particular. By the 1891

Factory Act, there were regulations made to restrict the number of hours a woman could work in the factory as also the provision of rest hour for women workers. In 1908, the Indian Factory Commission further advocated measures to prevent the 'overexploitation of women in industries' and thereby suggested limiting the work time for women between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m.<sup>15</sup> Hence, in 1911, the Indian Factory Act reduced hours of work for women to eleven and provided for an hour and a half of rest time. The next Act of consequence for women workers was the Act of 1922, whereby the government sought to exclude women and children from all heavy and dangerous work and prohibited night work for women.<sup>16</sup>

The Factory Commission in 1908 in Madras Presidency found tacit acceptance from C.B. Simpson and Binny and Co., Madras for the policy of grouping young persons and women in the same class.<sup>17</sup> What is to be noted is the advantage such a clubbing together would bestow on the employers—acceptance of a notion of women's work being less productive than that of male workers and, thereby, that of a firm basis for differential wages.

In Madras, maternity benefit was first introduced in the Basel Mission in the 1920s. That is, fairly soon after such a scheme was first proposed in the draft convention passed at the first International Labour Conference held at Washington in 1919.<sup>18</sup> In Madras, it was in 1934 that the Maternity Benefit Bill was passed. Section 5 of the Act reads as follows: '5(1). Subject to the provisions of this Act, every woman worker in a factory not being a seasonal one shall be entitled to the payment of maternity benefit at the rate of eight annas a day for the actual days of her absence during the period immediately preceding her confinement and for four weeks immediately following her confinement as mentioned in Sub Section (2).'

Provided that a woman shall not be entitled to maternity benefit unless she has been employed in the factory of the employer from whom she claims maternity benefits for a period of not less than nine months preceding the date on which she gives notice under Sub Section (1) of Section 6.<sup>19</sup>

Most factories, including cotton mills, evaded payment of the benefit by taking advantage of the loopholes in the bill. In Choolai, two women workers who had been dismissed by the management when in an advanced stage of pregnancy were reinducted only because of pressure from the Madras Labour Union.<sup>20</sup> Despite legal provisions, those women who came back after pregnancy to work in the mill had to bribe the *maistri* to be put on the roll.<sup>21</sup>

Coming to the question of the receipt of maternity benefits, the data shows that maternity benefits paid were meagre. (See Tables IV & V).

Table IV  
Maternity Benefits Paid in 1936 under IFA, 1934 in all Industries

District	No. of women	In perennial factories	No. claiming M.B.	No. paid M.B.	Others paid M.B.	Total amount of MB paid (Rs)	No. Decided by inspector
Coimbatore	11630	8207	171	148	1	3412	3
Madras	347	347	3	3	—	57	—
Madurai	5122	3948	506	383	1	9220	—
Total (including other districts)	46070	30324	1268	938	9	21211	8

Source: Development Department, G.O. 1455-57, 29.6.1937.

Table V  
Maternity Benefit in Coimbatore Mills

Year	No. of Mills paying M.B.	Av. Women/day	Benefits paid	Amount (Rs)
1936	11	4021	143	3219.8
1937	16	4654	189	4327.0

Source: Madras Labour Enquiry—Venkatramayya Committee Report, Madras, 1938, p. 159.

A survey of the cotton mills in Coimbatore revealed that, of the 24 mills employing over 6000 women, only 11 employing 4000 women paid any benefit in 1936. Only 16 mills employing around 4600 women did so in 1937. That is, 13 mills with 2000 women in 1936 and 8 mills with more than 1500 women in 1937 paid no benefit.<sup>22</sup>

Though the maternity benefit scheme and reduction in work time were in fact meant for the welfare of women labourers, their consequence, at times, was dismissal from work or unequal status for women at work. E.g. after 1908, the employers of B & C Mills in Madras gradually began displacing women workers with young persons on half time basis.<sup>23</sup> And in Madurai, in September 1937, some 614 women were dispensed with when night production was started. According to Varadarajalu Naidu, a labour leader of Madurai, it was a move by the management to avoid paying maternity benefit.<sup>24</sup> The management's reasoning was that since women were not allowed to work at night and as there were too many for day work, they had to be dispensed with.<sup>25</sup> Whatever be the real reason, these acts limited the scope of female employment. Similarly, a shorter working day enacted was used to rationalise the lower wages paid to them while, in fact, the reduction in wage was not in proportion to the reduction in working hours.

The Factory Acts also sought to control trade union activity of the workers. One specific clause which invited resistance and violation in practice by the workers was aimed at prohibiting the holding of office in the trade union by outsiders.<sup>26</sup>

Unionised or otherwise, workers in the colonial period had to contend with the institution of the *maistry*. The employment of workers at the factory was through the *maistri* who combined in him the roles of supervisor and recruiting agent. The workers were completely controlled by the *maistry* and complaints against the *maistri* were innumerable. The *maistri's* domination of women workers had an additional dimension of sexual exploitation. The prolonged 1920 Madura mill strike was provoked by the molestation of a woman worker by the *maistri*. The *maistris*, at times, used foul language, calling women workers immoral, etc., if their productivity came below the expectations of the supervisors in the mill.<sup>27</sup> The Madura mill labour leader, Varadarajala Naidu, at a meeting 'alluded to a certain case that happened in the mill, of a woman falling prostrate at the feet of a *maistri* for a slight fault of hers.'<sup>28</sup> Therefore, suggestions for female *maistris* in departments dominated by women workers were made by the labour union. Women, on leaving work during the period of confinement, had to pay Rs 4 to 5 to the *maistri* to obtain the job once again. This was stated by workers all over the country to the officials of the Royal Commission on Labour in 1929.<sup>29</sup>

Harsh working conditions, oppression at the workplace and erosion of their real incomes, either because wages constantly trailed prices as the latter moved upwards or because the managements effected cuts even in nominal wages, led to organised resistance by the workers.

#### UNIONISATION OF WORKERS

By the end of the first world war, unionisation of workers had begun. The first instance was in the B & C Mills on April 27, 1918.<sup>30</sup> After that, a number of unions came into existence like the Kerosene Oil Workers' Union, the Public Works Department Workers' Union, the Madura Corporation Workers' Union, etc.<sup>31</sup> The occurrence of strikes was traced by the Government to the high cost of food and other necessities of life<sup>32</sup> after the war when industrial wages did not keep pace with the rising price index. The twenties were a period of industrial strife in this region. Between 1921 and 1930, a number of strikes occurred in Madras: The Madras Corporation Workers' Union demanded a minimum wage of Rs 25 for men, Rs 20 for women and also asked for speedy implementation of maternity benefit scheme.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the PWD Union too demanded minimum wages for men and women along with provision of facilities like creches, maternity benefit and milk for the children of women workers.<sup>34</sup> An interesting strike is that of kerosene oil workers on September 18, 1930 when they struck work opposing retrenchment of thirty-five women workers who

were to be discharged in favour of cheap mofussil labour.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the thirties, the cotton mills witnessed a series of strikes for better wages, in specific, and good working conditions, in general, in which women's participation was very high.

When a woman worked in a modern cotton mill, it did not automatically remove the burden of tradition on her as traditional forms of subordination persisted in the family. And this was, in fact, a means which the management resorted to, to quell any protest emerging among women workers against working conditions in the mills. The *maistri* was used to subdue them because their access to their means of livelihood was through him. The women workers' subservience to the *maistri* was reinforced by the social conditioning they received in their families in the forms of submission to the male head of the household.

The need to look after domestic work along with mill work limited women's access to time for political activism. 'She gets up before four in the morning, prepares food for her husband, his paralytic mother, children, herself, finishes housework, goes with her husband, in very truth, runs with him to the mill five miles away . . . to begin a hard day of labour inside the mill.'<sup>36</sup> Thus, a combination of the role of the housewife with that of the worker was burdensome and had to be grappled with as these were *a priori* assigned in society to women since the time when such division of labour evolved. Hence, the culturally defined role of womanhood coalescing in motherhood further limited scope for women's involvement in union work. This was so because after long hours of work at the mill, it was next to impossible with their homely duties to attend late evening meetings and deliberate on issues of the union.

#### MEMBERSHIP IN UNIONS

Though we do not have evidence of women's membership on any large scale in unions and their active involvement in the process of unionisation, it is quite interesting to note that they were members of the union by the late 1920s and 1930s.

The first instance of women's participation in union proceedings is in 1918. According to a C.I.D. report, on December 9, 1918 at a public meeting of the Madras Labour Union at Perambur barracks addressed by B.P. Wadia, there were 3,000 men and 20 women and it was announced that 100 more women had joined the union.<sup>37</sup> These women became part of the union, swimming against the tide—pressures from the family, the management, and society in general. Instances of their militant fight against manoeuvres trying to prevent their activism in the union are available for both the Madura Mills, Madurai and the B&C Mills, Madras, which we discuss below.



Table VI  
Trade Union Membership

Unions registered for membership	No. at beginning	No.		No. at the end	
		joined	left	Male	Female
1927-28					
B&C Mills	3948	120	1951	2117	-
MLU	7428	64	52	7320	120
1929-30					
B&C Mills	2060	169	1361	868	-
MLU	4035	1876	178	5504	229
1932-33					
B&C Mills	325	63	125	263	-
MLU	3206	100	817	2459	30
Madura Union	1588	728	1889	324	103
Coimbatore Union	102	142	-	244	-
1933-34					
B&C Mills	263	116	950	329	-
Madras LU	2489	386	-	2798	77
Madura LU	427	526	382	446	125
Coimbatore LU	-	-	-	219	-

Source: 1927-28—Public Works and Labour, G.O. 2546 L, 16-10-1928, T.N.A.

1929-30—Public Works and Labour, G.O. 3031-32, 27-10-30, T.N.A.

1932-33—Public Works and Labour, G.O. 477 L, 24-2-1934, T.N.A.

1933-34—Public Works and Labour, G.O. 15 L, 3-1-1934, T.N.A.

#### THE MADURA MILL STRIKE APRIL 22-JUNE 1, 1920

'The reason for the *strike* is not increased wages or shorter hours of work but protection of *honour*.'<sup>38</sup> This had been the general impression in various vernacular newspapers of the period. The immediate reason for the strike was the misbehaviour of Guruswamy Naidu, the head *maistri*, with a woman Vellayammal who was dismissed on a flimsy reason of wasting cotton.<sup>39</sup> Thus on 12th April, women demanded the dismissal of the *maistri* and his replacement by a female *maistri*. This was the culmination of the increasing desire of women workers to join the union to fight for better conditions of work.<sup>40</sup> When the women expressed their desire to organise themselves, the *maistri* began systematic bullying and abusing of the women, making their work life miserable and unbearable.<sup>41</sup> This strike of women in the Madura Mill was the first of its kind in the annals of Indian history according to the Hindu Newspaper. By April 25th, the workers at large struck work on demands ranging from recognition of the union to dismissal of the head-*maistri*.<sup>42</sup> While the strike was generally attributed to infringement of the women's honour, very few bothered to see that it was essentially an attempt to quell the burgeoning attempts of the women to resist their exploitation as workers that manifested as offences against their decency and self-respect as 'good' women. It was left to *The Hindu* to

note the class-basis of the event. The point to note is that the evolving consciousness of women workers, their protest against the *maistri's* language and attitude, was viewed from a traditional angle, as a fight to preserve the honour of women, their chastity and self-respect. This may be because of the social scenario within which such a protest was staged—one where chastity of women was considered sacred and in whose defence even lives could be lost. And, thereby, the women worker's subordination at the workplace by the *maistri* was not seen in terms of power in a total sense, but rather as being used to sexually exploit women by calling names, manhandling, etc. Thus, the strike was viewed as a battle to maintain the honour of women workers and not as a challenge to the mill management's oppression of women workers by denying them the right to organise. Such an attitude affected the ability of the workers to transcend the limits imposed by social norms and customs and culture to attain class consciousness.

In Madurai, the mill management sided with the *maistri* and broke the strike with police repression and blacklegs.<sup>43</sup> By June 1, 1920, almost all the workers were back at the mill. This instance may be viewed as an example where women's protest against working conditions is considered as a purely gender question. It was another channel through which sexual ideology permeated and shaped mentalities of the workers and impeded development of consciousness.

#### DISMISSAL OF WOMEN IN PERAMBUR MILLS, 1926

Almost a similar sequence of events took place in Madras. On July 1, 1926, over 200 women were dismissed by the B&C Mill authorities.<sup>44</sup> The reason given by Mr Kay, the manager, was that since 1911, it had been a policy decision of the management to avoid employing women. B. Shiva Rao, the President of the Madras Labour Union, rightly raised the question as to why the dismissal came after fifteen years.<sup>45</sup> The reasons are apparent—the impudence and audacity of the women workers as reflected in their joining the union. Similar views are expressed by the vernacular paper, *Swarajya*, as to why the women were dismissed: 'The management started with the women workers thinking that it would be an easy matter to bully the women workers into submission. . . However the women proved to be more tough and united than the men for they have in a body resolved to face dismissal rather than disown their union.'<sup>46</sup>

To the labour department, it appeared that the dismissal came about because the management wanted to avoid having women on its rolls on account of the lurid stories presented of their conditions of work at the mill by the Madras Labour Union.<sup>47</sup> However, the MLU leader denied having ever presented any such account of the conditions of work of women at the B&C Mills in any of the MLU meetings.<sup>48</sup> The union denied what the management sought to affirm—that the dismissal was because the management wanted to relieve women from

the sorry state of work at the mill. It was evident that these women were dispensed with because of their political activism, of their association with the union.

Besides, when women workers of the B&C Mills became members of the Madras Labour Union, the Managing Director wrote to B. Shiva Rao, the President of the Union, whether he would provide employment for the 250 women workers of the B&C Mills who were to be dismissed on 1st July 1926 on account of their joining the union.<sup>49</sup> This intimidation of the women workers was revoked only when the middle class women's organisation, the Women's Indian Association of Madras, demonstrated outside Gokhale Hall against the B&C Mill authorities.<sup>50</sup> Such an instance of victimisation had a negative impact on the consciousness of women workers of the B&C Mills. The women workers soon severed connection with the union.<sup>51</sup> Much as women were getting integrated into the protest movements of the time, the disabilities imposed on them continued to be used consciously or unconsciously by the managements. For example, in the B&C Mills, Madras, as noted, it was lurid stories spread on women's problems at the mill that was used by the management to dismiss women workers. Hence, if women dared to be part of the union there was stiff opposition.

#### WOMEN IN STRIKE ACTION

During the period, 1914-1939, there are plenty of instances of women workers, either spontaneously or as part of the union, reacting to issues affecting them at the workplace, be it a question of wages, sexual oppression or victimisation. The earliest instance during the period of our study has been the strike of women workers in the Madura Mill in 1920 to protest against the behaviour of the head *maistri* provoked by their desire to join the union, as mentioned earlier. In 1923 there were strikes in Madras where women workers protested against a decrease in wage. From 4th to 6th April and again from 4th to 11th May, seventy women workers of the reeling department of the Choolai Mill went on strike but the management did not accede to their demands.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, they resumed work without success.

In Madurai, in March, 1931, there was a major strike. The reason for the strike was the demands of the union which was not even recognised by the managements. Those involved numbered 9,000, of whom over 2,000 were women.<sup>53</sup> The management tried to dissolve the union but came to loggerheads with the labourers. The astonishing reaction was the spirit of the women workers. 'They were willing to hold out for another six weeks if necessary for the assertion of their elementary right to form a union.'<sup>54</sup> Their discipline at the meetings was perfect and the word of the union was law to them.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in the Kaleswarar Mills, Coimbatore, when the management did not keep its promise of reducing the cut in wages from 25% to 15%, on February 15, 1934, women of the reeling section, numbering 210, struck work. In the

afternoon, 230 men of the spinning section struck work in sympathy with the women.<sup>56</sup> The strike assumed larger proportions when the union took up the issue and, consequently, an increase in wages was secured in the settlement made on February 23. On July 15, 1935, 240 women coolies of the reeling department of Pankaja Mill, Coimbatore, struck work demanding an increase in wages for reeling yarn. They returned to work on 17 July, 1934 only when the demand for increased wages was complied with.<sup>57</sup>

In the major textile mill strike in Madurai in 1938, there was considerable involvement of women workers. On February 6, a meeting of labourers was held in the evening at around 7 p.m. in which about 3,000 men and 500 women participated.<sup>58</sup> In yet another meeting near Pandyan Mill on 11-2-1938, 500 men and 200 women attended and, on February 19, 1938, in a meeting of Pandyan mill workers at Manalmedu, two women workers addressed an audience of 250 men and 350 women.<sup>59</sup>

Coimbatore witnessed several industrial disputes between 1936 and 1939. This was an outcome of the development of organisations among the workers, their greater involvement and last, but not least, wage cuts and price increases which brought them to the lowest level of existence economically. There were widespread strikes at Saroja, Sarada, Rangavilas, Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving, Lakshmi and Rajalakshmi mills. In these strikes, women played an extremely active role. On October 5, 1937, a large crowd of strikers were outside Rajalakshmi mills. Women in large numbers mobbed Abbey Naidu who was taking blacklegs to work in the mills. And in three mills in Singanallur, women workers picketted the mill gates, armed with shoes and broomsticks.<sup>60</sup> In the Saroja Mill, a new tactic was adopted during the strike. The picketting leaders dissuaded the women working in the reeling section from going to work and thereby paralysed the work as, without them, the last process of reeling work could not go on.<sup>61</sup> This was on March 1, 1937 and the management was forced to bring women labourers from outside the next day. In Sarada Mill, Coimbatore, 65 workers sitting inside refused to go out. They squatted on the road in front of the mill entrance hindering movement of the mill manager's car.<sup>62</sup> Some women labourers prostrated themselves before the car. However, the police let the car go, whereupon the labourers stoned the vehicle heavily. This was on February 18, 1938. In Lakshmi mills, in the strike on 12-11-1937, the number of males involved was 480, that of females 320 and night shift workers 350.<sup>63</sup>

Women workers did, however, face specific difficulties even during strikes. For example, during the strike period in the Lakshmi mills in 1937, one Rangaswami, an ex-employee of the mill, molested some female blacklegs.<sup>64</sup> Devarajulu Naidu, the Manager also reported that on 2-10-1937 a Karumba caste coolie woman was roughly handled by some women pickets.<sup>65</sup>

In September 1937, the management of the Madura Mills gave notice to men spinners in the ring frame department, that they would be required to do two weeks' night shift and one week's day shift.<sup>66</sup> This was to accommodate women workers as they could not be employed at night according to restrictions imposed on night work for women. Hence, employing women labour meant shifting male workers from day work to night work. This was not acceptable to the male workers of the ring frame department. Therefore, on September 6, the men workers decided to go on strike.<sup>67</sup> Then, a number of complaints from women workers of molestation by pickets were recorded.<sup>68</sup> The battle, instead of getting pitched collectively against cut in production and wages, got subverted.

In the distribution of paddy among striking workers of Madurai on March 29, 1938 by the union, women were not given paddy. As a result, they were keen on joining work as soon as the mills reopened.<sup>69</sup> Such gender differentiation with regard to distribution of supplies during strikes resulted in the alienation of women workers from the ranks of strikers. This differential treatment probably has its roots in a perception which refused to see women as bread-winners. Rather, they were, despite their participation in wage work, still primarily viewed as dependents in male-headed households. However, despite these handicaps faced both at the workplace and at home, there is evidence of women's active involvement and membership in a predominantly male sphere—the union and strike activity during the period under review.

The participatory actions of women workers during strikes were not less militant than those of men. They were active in picketting, brickbattling and stoning. During the strike in Madurai Mills in 1931, what astonished Shiva Rao was the spirit of the women workers more than that of the men.<sup>70</sup> In a meeting of strikers during the textile mills strike in Madurai, women volunteers spoke and advised the labourers to be united and asked for better wages and bonus.<sup>71</sup> In fact, in a culture of violent militancy that developed in Coimbatore, Madurai and Madras during the period of tumultuous industrial strife in the late thirties, women were extremely active. The fact that women workers *gheraoed* the manager's car outside the Sarada Mill in Coimbatore during a strike in 1938 is one example of this trend.<sup>72</sup> Though solutions to the women's problems at the workplace were sought through mobilisation in protests and activation in strikes, their larger question of social emancipation remained unsolved, in the sense that they continued to be exploited dually as a worker and a woman.

#### ORGANISED DEMANDS ON WOMEN

There were a number of meetings called specifically for women labourers by the various unions. This was especially done regularly by the Madras Labour Union where women from the Women's Indian Association also came and took up special schemes like baby welfare,

creches, etc. for the women workers. Through these, middle class women were becoming active in the labour movement of the city.<sup>73</sup> Participation in such meetings led to the incident of women workers being served notice for dismissal by the management in Perambur B&C Mills in 1926, already referred to. One hundred and sixty women of Perambur Mills attended one such meeting and were served notice.<sup>74</sup> Meetings on a similar note also took place in Coimbatore and Madura. In 1939, on May 30, S.R. Varadarajulu, on behalf of the Madura Labour Union, addressed a women workers' meeting. The discussion was on the amendment introduced to the maternity benefits bill and the need to fight for pension for women workers as also a number of other concessions.<sup>75</sup>

Although the unions were predominantly male in composition, they did take up some of the demands of women workers. The Madras Labour Union, the Coimbatore Labour Union, the Madura Labour Union and the Coimbatore Socialist Textile Workers Union took up women's issues, like maternity benefit, rest hours, increased wages in general and provision of creches. It is interesting to note that the Madras Labour Union from April 30, 1930 decided to give all its women members maternity benefit.<sup>76</sup> It was the same union in the Choolai Mill that demanded an increase in wages for women in the reeling department in 1929.<sup>77</sup> They also demanded an increase in the wage of women wastepickers which had been reduced by the management on account of shortage of work at the mill for them.<sup>78</sup> The charter of demands of the Coimbatore Labour Union had a section on women. It demanded :

- (1) that every pregnant woman be entitled to one month's holiday with wages and without,
- (2) arrangements for keeping little children for feeding if request comes from women workers,
- (3) that every worker be given two sets of clothes every year at cost price.<sup>79</sup>

In the workers' movement of the period under review, demands for better wages for women, special facilities of work time and maternity benefit were raised. In fact, in the Madura Mill strike of 1930, the union demanded maternity benefits and creches for women workers.<sup>80</sup> The cotton dust in the mills was believed to be the cause of high rate of infant mortality and to prevent that, leave was necessary for pregnant women.<sup>81</sup>

A number of union leaders stressed the need to unionise women in order to change their miserable condition. The MLU representative, Mr R. Naidu, said, 'The conditions of women workers was more unsatisfactory than those of men: because of their domestic work, they are unable to attend meeting and their hardship is greater than men's. Their wages are lower and the absence of a woman jobber leads to many

complications.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, B. Shiva Rao, President of the MLU, in a public meeting on 8th June in Madras, said—"The men, at any rate, had only the employers to deal with, but the women had to serve their employers and their employees." He wanted men workers to realise that unless they treated their women-folk well at home, they should not expect better treatment from their employers.<sup>83</sup> He was clear that the 'trade union movement could not grow strong and healthy without women's active participation in union work.'<sup>84</sup> In Madras, when Mr Naidu was arrested and then released under the section 144, he appointed his wife as the President of the Union to carry on the strike plan. His intention was to work through his wife in organising the movement. What is significant is that despite traditional barriers a woman is placed in that position.

Thus, another significant aspect of the women's experience of the union is the adoption of a radical stance by union leaders on the women's question that went beyond demanding better facilities for women workers at the workplace.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

We find that the cotton mills in colonial India in our area of study grew under difficult conditions whereby the Indian factory owners ruthlessly pursued such policies as would help them maximise profit i.e. to underpay labourers and at the same time exploit them to the maximum by long hours of work and poor conditions of work. Here we find that socially constructed notions of female inferiority were especially used to pay women workers even less than were their male counterparts.

Lower wages for women workers are predicated upon the notion of female inferiority. The division of labour which sets aside domestic chores, including child rearing, exclusively for women also fit in well with the requirements of the stage of capitalist system under review, something which the Indian Factory Commission recognised explicitly. The result is that the general notion of the subordinate status of women is integrated into the capitalist value system and reproduced in its every-day practice. These included the exclusion of women from certain better paying occupation, as we have seen, and even their sexual exploitation at the workplace, strongly suggested by the evidence of the women workers' persistent complaints against the *maistris*.

We may note that the state also actively intervened in the reinforcement of received values about women in the new conditions of production. By expressing solicitous concern for the welfare of women and clubbing them along with admittedly vulnerable child workers—in the legislations regulating work at the factories, by tolerating differential levels of wages and occupations for men and women, by championing their 'morality' defined as susceptibility to corruption by the night and the absence of trusted male escort and by accepting

domestic work as the exclusive domain of the women for which special allowances could be made, the state contributed directly to building the ideological framework in which gender inequality was given the forms suitable to the new conditions of production. The role of the state in maintaining the material and ideological condition for the perpetuation of gender inequality included, naturally, its support of the existing social, economic and political order.

At the same time, we come across evidence of the state playing a positive rôle vis-a-vis the unequal status of women. The obligation of the employer at the workplace to grant women workers maternity benefits and other child-care facilities contains in it, though partially, the explicit denial of the idea that child-bearing and rearing are exclusively female responsibilities confined to the family. The formal institutionalisation by the state of such obligation, even when not followed up with its monitoring and enforcement, has the effect of eroding one premise of gender inequality.

We have also seen how gender ideology was utilised, on the one hand, to make women work harder (e.g. through the exercise of the patriarchal authority of the *maistri*) and, on the other, to foil their attempts to resist their exploitation (as in the reported case of infringement of women workers' honour and the molestation of women pickets).

The role of the *maistri* is a particular form of the articulation of gender ideology in relation to industrial labour explained by the nature of social groupings prevalent in the time and place of our study and their continuance into the industrial phase.

The insights that Karl Marx offers on the subject in the first volume of *Capital* seems very relevant. For women, the process of entering the industrial workplace meant additional misery. The displacement of the previous agrarian existence where work on the farm blended with domestic work and its replacement by a disjunction between the workplace and the home placed a heavy double burden on the women which constituted a chief component of their additional misery.

At the same time, by becoming direct participants in social production, new avenues for self-realisation and eventual emancipation opened up for women. We have not been able to investigate the implications of women acquiring independent earnings because of the limitations of data. Our evidence, however, warrants some comments on the developments of their consciousness through the process of unionisation.

As we have seen, women have been actively involved in organised protest actions at the mill. They were mobilised on issues specific to women and on issues concerning the workers generally. And their participation in such actions, at times, was exceedingly militant (e.g. their stopping and stoning the manager's car during the strike at Sarada Mills in Coimbatore) represents a clear break from their



traditionally accepted behavioural attitudes of passivity and docility. We have instances of women addressing meetings of the union and even presiding over its affairs. It would be permissible to conclude that the experience of unionisation was, for the women, one which imparted the confidence and the initiative needed to play a more active role in shaping their own lives. Their participation in the struggle of labour against capital, thus, opens the way for their general emancipation as well.

#### NOTES

1. RAMP, 1911-12, Madras, 1912, T.N.A.
2. RAMP 1936-37, Madras, 1937, T.N.A.
3. See Table I below.
4. Dev. Dept (Confidential) G.O. 869, 19-7-1933. T.N.A.
5. Public Works and Labour (M5) 2488 (Confidential), 15-11-1934, T.N.A.
6. *Imperial Gazetteer—Provincial series*, V-III, 1911, Madras, p. 247 and Public Works and Labour Dept. G.O. 2746L—Madras Government memorandum to Royal Commission on Labour, 1929. Also Public Works and Labour, 321 L, 1-2-1930, T.N.A.
7. Dev. Dept. C.O. 1050, 21-4-1938. When there is a lockout in Madurai the workers returned to their villages where paddy harvest gave them employment. T.N.A.
8. Law (General) Dept. G.O.—1957, 21-1-1921. T.N.A. and Dev. Dept. G.O.—2735, 7-12-1937. S.R. Varadarajulo Naidu during the strike at Madurai in 1936 expressed fear to the District Magistrate that Kallar labour might be used to break the strike.
9. Home Political, 33-6-1931, N.A.I. Bipanchandra *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 275-276.
10. Sastry K.R.R., Report of the Indian Economic Enquiry Commission VII, Madras 1925. p. 294. T.N.A.
11. RCL Vol VII, Part II, London, 1930, p. 144.
12. *Indian Factory Commission Report*, London, 1908, p. 46.
13. Ibid.
14. *Indian Factory Commission Report*, 1908, London, p. 48.
15. Ibid.
16. Development Dept. G.O. 940-940 A, 3-7-1923, T.N.A.
17. *Indian Factory Commission Report*, 1908, p. 304.
18. Dept. of Industry and Labour, L-1150 (e), 1924. N.A.I.
19. Source: Coimbatore Mills Strike Enquiry Report, Madras, 1938, p. 160.
20. *The Hindu*, Madras Labour Union, April 24, 1926.
21. *The Hindu*, Choolai mill hands grievances, January 12, 1927.
22. Madras Labour Enquiry—Venkataramayya Committee Report, Madras, 1938, p. 159.
23. *Indian Factory Commission Report*, 1908, p. 43. N.A.I.
24. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Mill Dispute'—Viewpoints of Workers, October 6, 1937.
25. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Mill Dispute, Examination of the Manager,' October 16, 1937.
26. Native Newspaper Report, Madras (NNR) Swarajya, 2-2-1926, Madras. T.N.A.
27. Development Dept. G.O. 902, 5-4-1939. This was the grievance of Kaleswarar mill women workers in a representation of demands made by the Coimbatore Mill Workers Union to V.V. Giri.
28. *The Hindu*, June 11, 1930.
29. RCL V-VII, Part II, London 1930, p. 60.
30. WADIA, B.P., *Labour in Madras*, London, 1921, p. 8.

31. PW & L, G.O. 3148L, 31-12-1928, T.N.A.
32. Commerce and Industry (I), November 6, 1919, N.A.I.
33. Dept. of Industry & Labour L 853 (16), 509-A, 8 January 1930, N.A.I.
34. Dept. of Industry and Labour L-878, 1931, NAI.
35. Ibid.
36. Ramabhai, M. 'The Women Labourers in Madras' in *Stri-Dharma*, July 1926, Madras. T.N.A.
37. Public Ordinary (Confidential), G.O.—388, 3-7-1919.
38. NNR, 'Desabhaktan, April 14, 1920, Madras.
39. *The Hindu*, April 22, 1920.
40. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Labour Union,' April 22, 1920.
41. Ibid.
42. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Labour Union,' April 27, 1920.
43. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Hill Strike,' June 5, 1920.
44. NNR, 'Swarajya,' July 5, 1926, Madras.
45. *The Hindu*, 'Madras Choolai Mill Strike,' July 6, 1926.
46. NNR, Madras, 'Swarajya,' July 5, 1926.
47. Public Works and Labour (Ms), G.O. 1101 L 3-4-1930, T.N.A.
48. Ibid.
49. RCL, Vol. III, Part II, London, 1930, p. 186.
50. Ibid., p. 187.
51. Ibid.
52. *Labour Gazette*, 'Disputes in Madras,' June, 1923.
53. Public Works and Labour (Confidential, 1454), L, 30 May 1931, T.N.A.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Public Works and Labour (Ms), G.O. 1602 15-17-1935 T.N.A.
57. Development Dept. G.O. 1052-53, 29-6-1936.
58. Development Dept., G.O.—1050, 21-4 -1938, T.N.A.
59. Ibid.
60. *The Hindu*, 'Coimbatore Mill Workers' Strike,' 3 November 1937.
61. Development Dept., G.O.—989, 11 April 1938, T.N.A.
62. Ibid., Also Dev. Dept., G.O.—448, 21 February 1938, T.N.A.
63. Dev. Dept., G.O. 448, 21 February 1938, T.N.A.
64. Dev. Dept., G.O. 2352, 19 October 1937, T.N.A.
65. Ibid.
66. Dev. Dept., G.O. 2153 (MS), 21 September 1937, T.N.A.
67. Dev. Dept., G.O. 2735, 7 December 1937, T.N.A.
68. Ibid.
69. Dev. Dept., G.O. 2532, 12 October 1938, T.N.A.
70. Public Worker, G.O. 1454, and Labour (Confidential), 30 May 1937.
71. Development Dept., G.O. 1050, 21 April 1938, T.N.A.
72. Development Dept., G.O. 989, 11 April 1938, T.N.A.
73. Public Works and Labour, G.O. 2434L, 16 October 1927, T.N.A.
74. NNR, Madras.
75. *The Hindu*, 'Madura Labour Union, May 31, 1939.
76. Public Works and Labour, G.O. 321L, 1 February 1930, T.N.A.
77. RCL, VII, Part II, p. 140.
78. Ibid.
79. Dept. of Industry and Labour, L-878 (14), 1928, N.A.I.
80. Public Works and Labour, G.O. 703L, 27 February 1930, T.N.A.
81. Ibid.
82. RCL, Vol. VII, Part II, 1930, p. 173. Madura Labour Union.
83. Ibid., p. 186.
84. Ibid., p. 412.

MEERA VELAYUDHAN\*

## *Caste, Class and Political Organisation of Women in Travancore*

Even as a growing body of literature has made women more visible in historical studies, they have also indicated that women's movements correspond to and are, to a certain extent, determined by wider social movements of which women are a part. In post-colonial societies in particular, women's movements have been inextricably linked with the processes of social reform, nationalism and class struggle.<sup>1</sup> Women are considered as actors in the historical process rather than as passive recipients of social change. This arose from a recognition of the social and economic structures that define women's subordination and within which women have, nonetheless, collectively struggled to establish their independence and autonomy.<sup>2</sup> Studies on gender and working class struggles have raised issues of great significance, both for the women's as well as working class movements. Some indicate that women's participation in these struggles were mediated through their roles as wives and mothers.<sup>3</sup> Others have stated that class consciousness and class action may arise differently for men and women owing to the differences in their family roles.<sup>4</sup> Some have linked women's lives with the forces of structural change and power of ideas.<sup>5</sup> Our study locates the dynamics of women's political participation within the context of Kerala, the Ezhava social reform and working class struggles in Travancore in the 40s.

### IMPACT OF SOCIAL REFORM

The structural changes in the economy owing to colonisation, in particular the land relations, commercialisation and the rise of an educated middle class, created tensions within the traditional caste and social structures. The rise and growth of political consciousness among women in Travancore was a complex process for the impact of colonisation on the existing hierarchical social order (like caste), with varying roles for different sections (Namboodiris, Nairs, Ezhavas, Pulayas, etc.) gave different forms to the social reform movements that

\* Research Scholar, Department of History, Jamia Milia University, New Delhi.

arose among them. The changes in land relations were reflected in the growing demand for changes in property rights, forms of marriage and family organisation. The struggle between matrilineal property rights and individual rights took an intense form.<sup>6</sup> With changes in inheritance laws in Travancore during 1912-25 and the Travancore Nayar Regulation of 1925, the process of division and transfer of matrilineal property to individual oriented patriliney. Women's right to property suffered with the emergence of such changes.

The tremendous social ferment enveloping upper caste Nair and Nambudiri communities is poignantly brought out in some of the literature of the period. Chandu Menon's powerful social novel 'Indulekha'<sup>7</sup> (1889) highlighted not only the changing self-perception of their social status among the Nairs, but also the emergence of women as individuals, with the right to choice in marriage and sexuality. Education and enlightenment enabled Indulekha to assert herself and reject the privilege of the Namboodiris to take women from Nair households as they liked. Within the matrilineal household, Indulekha chose to assert her right to make decisions about her own life, in this case, her marriage.

The reform movement among the Namboodiris raised issues of individual right to property, polygamy, opposition to old persons marrying and choice in marriage. These issues were projected in several literary works. V.T. Bhattathiripad's play *Addukalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* (From the kitchen to the stage), a strong indictment of the dowry system and the practice of young girls being married off to old men, was performed in several Namboodiri households. M.P. Bhattathiri's *Ritumati* discussed the taboo attached to educated girls and even to allowing them to dress properly. M.B. Nambudiripad's *Atmahuti* (self sacrifice) attacked the dowry system among Namboodiris while *Vidhvayute Vidhi* portrayed the fate of widows. These works indicated the changing values of the times.<sup>8</sup> Ideas of individual freedom and equality gained momentum.

It was, however, the social reform movement among the low castes, the Ezhavas in particular and the ideas that it generated which had a far-reaching impact in defining women's identity and role in the social and political processes of change taking place in Travancore in the early part of this century. The Ezhavas were placed between the former slaves, Pulayas and the savarnas in the caste hierarchy. They followed diverse occupations linked with the processing and trading of coconut products. The rise of a middle class and a bourgeoisie from among the Ezhavas led to anti-savarna struggles.<sup>9</sup>

Along with Dr Palpu, Sri Narayana Guru founded the *SNDP Yogam* (Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam) in 1903 with Kumaran Asan as its secretary. Under Sri Narayana Guru's leadership, the anti-savarna movement gained force and mass participation. Organised around an ashram, the SNDP Yogam's main objective was to promote

and encourage religious and secular education and industrious habits among the Ezhavas, and this included strict monogamy and abolition of the *tali*-tying ceremony.<sup>10</sup> To Sri Narayana Guru, the temple was not only a place of worship but a centre for providing training in diversified skills and for the upliftment of the poor. The elaborate and expensive marriage ceremonies and puberty rites—*talikettu kalnayam*, *terandukuli*, *pulikudi*—which affected women in particular, were among the earliest issues which received his attention.<sup>11</sup> At a meeting in 1905 in Quilon, Sri Narayana Guru suggested that these practices be stopped.<sup>12</sup> He also advocated the simplification of marriages by limiting the ceremony to *tali*-tying by the groom and mutual garlanding. He also suggested that only ten persons, including the couple to be married, be present during the marriage ceremony. He propagated the patrilineal system of inheritance and monogamous marriage.<sup>13</sup> The Ezhavas in the areas of Travancore north of Quilon followed the matrilineal system, while in the south, half a man's property went to his children and half to his sister's son.

Another trend within the Ezhava social reform were the activities and ideas of Kumaran Asan, the popular poet. As a member of the Travancore legislature, he advocated increased facilities for the education of Ezhava girls and boys.<sup>14</sup> It was, however, his literary works which exercised a greater ideological influence. As the editor of the SNDP journal, *Vivekodayam* he not only propagated the ideas of his organisation but also gave expression to his own ideas, through poems. Although his poems, *Veena Poovu* (1908), *Nalini* (1911) and *Leela* (1914) were hailed as good examples of Romantic poetry, it was three of his later poems—*Chintavishtayaya Sita* (1919), *Duruvastha* (1923) *Chandalabhikshuki* (1923) which were the most powerful in terms of social concern, particularly for women. His long monologue on Sita does not project her as an epitome of passivity. Instead, Sita's thoughts embody women's right to justice. As preparations for the *Aswamedha Yagna* are taking place, Sita waits at Valmiki's ashram, conflicting thoughts crossing her mind. To begin with, she indicts Rama's injustice to her. She says, 'Would the king abandon in the woods his faithful wife while she was pregnant, and continue to rule the country putting up with this calumny?'<sup>15</sup> Rama did not protect her against such baseless charges when 'even a scamp would resent anyone slandering his wife. How then did a noble king heed as truth the aspersions against me',<sup>16</sup> Sita says indignantly. Angry, she continues, 'Does the king intend that I should appear before him, prove my innocence and live as his consort? Does he take me for a puppet?'<sup>17</sup> The poem, however, ends with Sita asking Rama for forgiveness. 'Pardon me', she says, 'for the blemishes that I discovered in you just now in a state of mental disturbance'.<sup>18</sup> We see in Sita's role the possibilities of the emerging consciousness as well as its limit. The impact of his ideas

has been noted by a woman activist who recalled that within the *Atma Vidya Sangam*, of which she was a member, they discussed the role of women in society, particularly with reference to Sita.<sup>19</sup> Asan's other two poems, *Duruvastha* and *Chandalabhikshuki* discuss inter-caste relations. In the former, he brings together in matrimony a Namboodiri woman and a Pulaya man. The latter is based on the Buddhist tale of Anand and Matangi, a Chandala woman, in which he asks, 'Is caste found in blood or is it in the bone or the marrow. . . Does the Brahmin get his learning without being tutored.'<sup>20</sup>

An important trend within the Ezhava social reform movement were reflected in the ideas and activities of K. Aiyappan (1889–1969). His basic philosophy lay in his slogan—'no caste, no religion, no God, no class.'<sup>21</sup> Influenced by Periyar with whom he was in constant touch, Aiyappan initiated activities concerned with the propagation of inter-caste relations between the Ezhavas and Pulayas. Inter-caste dining and formation of brotherhood associations were part of these efforts. He also criticised the practice of pilgrimages to different places and animal sacrifice. The Ezhavas worshipped female deities such as *Bhagwati* and *Chamundi*,<sup>22</sup> offering them liquor and animals. Spirits and goddesses connected with diseases like small pox were also propitiated.

Aiyappan introduced a new element within the social reform movement, the rights of workers. Besides, he propagated the right of the individual to freedom of choice in marriage and equal property rights for men and women. It was in the interest of national progress to remove caste and religious distinctions and to have marriages based on love, he asserted. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages were considered as necessary steps in this direction.<sup>23</sup> His rationalist and egalitarian ideas influenced the working class movement in particular. Women activists from Alleppey recall participation in inter-caste dining programmes among the workers and how that experience provided the context for developing solidarity among themselves.<sup>24</sup>

At another level, women began to be organised by the SNDP Yogam. The initiative came from Dr Palpu who had suggested that a women's conference be held during the annual conferences of the SNDP Yogam. Accordingly a women's conference was held during the first annual conference in 1904. According to a report, Dr Palpu's mother presided over the conference<sup>25</sup> and his wife 'who was present in the meeting inspired all women by her speech.'<sup>26</sup> Later in the 30s, the SNDP *Vanitha Samajam*, was formed in Alleppey with Dr C.I. Rukmini Amma, Kadambari, Bhargavi Amma, Kalikutty Assatty as its main activists.<sup>27</sup> Recollecting the experience, Kalikutty said, 'women were slaves. They had no education, they could not walk on the roads, they were not supposed to look at their men's faces nor speak with others. They were mere child-bearing machines.'<sup>28</sup> Issues discussed by the samajam were women's unity, household care, care of children and

husbands and hygiene.<sup>29</sup> The organisation began to attract more and more women and many even attended public meetings.<sup>30</sup> They took part in temple entry meetings and demonstrations, in inter-caste dining programmes.<sup>31</sup> This led to a great deal of social opposition and they were often considered as 'untouchables'. Although some women retreated in the face of social pressure, Kalikutty Assatty and Dr Rukmini Amma, continued their activities.<sup>32</sup> However, the death of Rukmini Amma and Kalikutty Assatty's widowhood prevented the samajam from 'forging ahead'.<sup>33</sup> It was only with the rise of the working class movement in Alleppey in the late 30s that the issue of the special organisation of women came up again.<sup>34</sup>

With the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25), aspects of social reform and the national movement coalesced, ushering in a new phase in women's political participation. At a meeting in Varkala<sup>35</sup> held by the SNDP Yogam on 13 March, 1925 Gandhi addressed the women. He said, 'I understand that not very long ago . . . at least every woman in your community was a beautiful spinner, thousands knew how to spin.' He called on women to take to spinning which he termed 'the Yagna' necessary for India's economic salvation.<sup>36</sup> When Sri Narayana called on his disciples to wear spotless khadi, Gandhi asked them to go among women and do propagate the same.<sup>37</sup> Earlier, in October, 1924, during a meeting of Ezhavas at the Satyagraha Ashram, a separate meeting of women was held to wish the jatha a success.<sup>38</sup> At yet another meeting of the *Ezhava Yuvajana Seva Sangam* at Shertallai of 2000 persons,<sup>39</sup> Swami Shivprasad called on women to take part in the satyagraha movement. A resolution was passed to set up schools and industrial centres for girls and boys. At a meeting of the *Karapuram Ezhava Yuvajana Seva Sangam* at Shertallai, EV Ramaswamy Naicker particularly requested that women volunteers are urgently required for the successful work of satyagraha. One hundred were enlisted on the spot including the wife of K. Aiyappan and Rs 100 collected.<sup>40</sup> Addressing the *Hindu Mahajana* meeting, a young Ezhava woman from Muthukulam, Parvati Amma said that women of savarna Hindu community should take a prominent part in such meetings and that they should try their level best to uplift women from the savarna Hindu communities. She advocated inter-community dining, inter-caste marriages and called for untouchability to be rooted out.<sup>41</sup> Meetings were also held at Chiryankil by the *Satyagraha Service Society* where a 1000 strong audience, mainly Ezhava men and women<sup>42</sup> and at Attingal where there were 'about eight hundred persons, about a third being made up of women'.<sup>43</sup>

The civil disobedience movement also influenced women. A women's conference in Alleppey<sup>44</sup> called for the boycott of foreign cloth and the importance of Khadi and temperance. Following this meeting, picketing of foreign cloth shops was initiated in Alleppey.<sup>45</sup> The participation of a Pulaya girl in this picketing programme was also

noted.<sup>46</sup> A meeting attended by 6000 people 'including a number of ladies'<sup>47</sup> was addressed by Dr C.I. Rukmini Amma, Smt Karthiyayani Amma and Mrs Mary Andrew.

Meetings of different communities were also held at Alleppey in which issues concerning women were highlighted. In May 1930, the *Atma Vidya Sangam* which had coir workers and their union activists among its members, held a women's conference<sup>48</sup> with Miss Rudrani presiding. It called for the opening up of temples and institutions maintained by public funds to all sections of the people. An *Inter-Religious Conference* held a women's meeting<sup>49</sup> presided over by Dr C.I. Rukmini Amma. She called on women to play a greater role in social activities and 'improve the character and happiness of their domestic life'.<sup>50</sup> The meeting called for the setting up of a college for the scientific study of all religions. An *All-Communities Conference*, was also held at Alleppey in which Anna Chandy, the first woman advocate, criticised the purdah system and pleaded for the education of women.<sup>51</sup> A *Women's Association* was formed in Alleppey in May 1931 with Dr C.I. Rukmini Amma and Mrs Krishna Pillai as its secretaries.<sup>52</sup>

The Ezhava social reform movement in Travancore was an unprecedented mass movement and touched the lives of the entire community. The struggle against the injustices of caste hierarchy contained elements of radicalism which appealed even to the poorer sections among the Ezhavas. The egalitarian and rationalist ideas of K. Aiyappan and E. Madhavan<sup>53</sup> influenced the coir workers in Alleppey, 80% of whom were estimated to be Ezhavas at the end of the thirties.<sup>54</sup> However, the workers under the leadership of the TLA (Travancore Labour Association) began to perceive their common interests as workers as evident from the resolution passed at the annual conference of the TLA in 1937. It stated that 'since the economic interests of all labour organisations comprising of people from different communities and religions are the same, within the labour organisations there is no relevance for religious or communal interests'.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, the Congress Socialist Party was gaining influence among the coir workers and its attempt to win over the workers to its political platform which sought to link the anti-savarna struggles with the anti-imperialist movement, through the development of the independent class organisations of workers and peasants. The general strike of workers in Alleppey in 1938 was decisive in facilitating this shift. For women workers who participated in this struggle in large numbers, the strike proved to be decisive. The dynamics of women's political participation are considered within the context of their conditions of work and the struggles of coir workers.



## WOMEN'S WORK

Historically, the production of coir has been linked with the life, work and struggle of women for their subsistence. Until the mid-nineteenth century, it was a subsidiary occupation of the Ezhava peasant women. Subsequently, coir spinning in Malabar came to occupy a position as important as cotton spinning was for women in Bengal and other areas in pre-British India. Women from the Ezhava community in particular were involved in the primary stages of the production of coir—defibring, drying, cleaning, spinning. In the last part of the 19th century when coir became a part of the international commodity market and with the entry of European coastal trading firms,<sup>56</sup> the production of coir spread all along the coastal belt of Kerala and became the most significant non-agricultural source of livelihood for the rural poor. Although sources are few, a study on coir spinning in Malabar in 1917 does indicate some important aspects of the sexual division of labour and women's work in the development of domestic industries. It states, 'The earnings of male members of the poor Indian family are too small to produce the necessities of life for half a dozen souls. The development of domestic industries, therefore, has always been the foremost planks in the platform of Indian industrialisation.'<sup>57</sup> That thousands of families still cling to home industries in yarn spinning and work hard for 9 annas a week, showed *its suitability*, the study maintained. 'At the present stage, it is too much to think of providing 'gainful' occupation for our women. It is not, however, altogether impossible to improve their lot so as to enable them to secure adequate earnings for the hard work they do in their homes'. Spinning done by women in the home was 'convenient' as 'it would not be prejudicial to their household duties', the study asserted.<sup>58</sup>

The wages that women earned were meagre. The same study revealed, 'Our working women get only 9 annas a week for their hard work which they continue till 10 p.m. every day. Their wages have been kept down by custom and their sense of helplessness makes them immobile. Also, the spirit of resignation is responsible for nominal wages that they now get.'<sup>59</sup> On the nature of the production organisation it says, 'The female (the mother) goes to the village merchant and procures softened husks of 25 coconuts to be cleaned, beaten, dried, spun. The girl alone assists her . . . she takes up the work of preparing yarns when it is most convenient to her. The hours during midday and earlier part of the night are generally found convenient. On an average it is found that she will be able to spin 15 palams of yarn in 24 hours. The finished product (15 palams) is taken to the merchant. He deducts 10 palams as 'seigniorage' to the master and for the remaining 5 palams pays 3 pies per palam—this being the family's daily earnings.'<sup>60</sup> Another study of an European coir firm says, 'The first coir yarn to be prepared by us at Karaparamba . . . was all spun in the cottages around Karaparamba, and was regarded as *an additional*

*source of income* to the women in Karaparamba who, after working by day in the yard which handled coffee, cardomoms, cinchona and ginger, would sit up spinning yarn as they discussed the days news late into the night. The following day the yarn would be taken to the local shops and exchanged for salt, chillies, coconut oil and other requirements of life on a barter basis.<sup>61</sup>

Although lack of uniformity in methods of enumeration or classification of occupations, created problems for assessing women's work, the census data since 1881 indicate the steady growth of the industry and women's employment. In Malabar, the number of persons involved in coir industry increased from 19,408 women and 1346 men in 1881 to 41,157 women and 4619 men in 1931. In Travancore, it rose from 57,955 women and 23,874 men in 1911 to 82,775 women and 43,652 men in 1931. According to the 1931 census, 8% of the workers ('earners') in Travancore and Cochin were involved in coir production. Sixteen per cent of the men and 40% of women who returned industries as their main occupation, depended on coir. In the 1931 census, 41,980 men and 95,014 women had returned coir as their main occupation.

#### COIR GOODS WEAVING SECTOR

The coir industry consisted of two sectors, the coir yarn spinning sector and the coir goods weaving sector. The production organisation in the former consisted of a range of pre-manufacturing forms—self-employed workers working in their own homes, piece rate workers working in their homes and rarely piece rated hired workers working in the common sheds of middlemen. *The coir goods weaving sector, using the raw material produced in the spinning sector, developed as the leading manufacturing industry in Travancore, based in and around Alleppey.* Since the twenties, there was a growth in the number of small factories and an expansion of the size of large-scale units. Production in the weaving sector consisted of weaving coir mat and matting from coir yarn on handlooms and the main part of the production was based on manual labour. The division of labour was based according to the wares produced and according to details of the operations, a pattern of development similar to the early stages of capitalist manufacture.<sup>62</sup>

#### CONDITIONS OF WORK

According to a report,<sup>63</sup> there were 27,000 workers in the coir manufactories. Only 11.1% were women while child workers formed 16.2% of the total workforce.<sup>64</sup> Work considered 'arduous'—weaving, shearing, spreading, stretching and dyeing—were performed by men, while work considered 'suitable' for women and in which 'judgement and nimble fingers' are necessary like sorting, braiding, splicing—were done by women. Children were involved in spooling and beaming.<sup>65</sup>

Wages of women and children were lower than men in the same occupation. As a report stated, 'Disparities in wages and earnings are

of course inevitable if men, women and children are employed in the same occupation and are paid on a piece rate basis as in mats stitching, beaming, dyeing and spooling. . . But it is indeed striking to note that such disparities exist even in those occupations where men are employed and also in braiding' where women are employed, owing to the piece rate system'.<sup>66</sup>

The case of a woman worker was cited by the union in 1938 while raising the issue of wage rates and contract labour. 'Kai Janaki has worked in the firm from her ninth year of age. She had worked there for 19 years. She makes braids. When braiding was done under the firms direct control the rate per 100 yards of braid was 10-13 chakrams and she herself has received wages at this rate for years. Now for the last seven years, braiding is done by contract work . . . the workers now get 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> chakrams per 100 yards. She earns 20 to 22 chs. per week. From this amount, 2 chs. per week goes to the contractor as 'moopankasu'. As she is an old worker in the firm, she does not like to go elsewhere nor will others take her, having so long been attached to one firm'.<sup>67</sup> Women were deprived of maternity leave pay and creche facilities.<sup>68</sup> Some of the employers said that they could not consider maternity benefit by the industry in its present condition.<sup>69</sup> Another argued<sup>70</sup> that there was no need for it 'as their work is such as would afford them enough time to take rest.' In his factory 'there are about 23 women workers and most of them are piece workers (splicers), who take the cuttings home and do splicing leisurely in their homes'. In the case of women engaged on a monthly wage basis, he would not object to it, he said. In another factory, the manager argued that 'the work turned out by women employees is very little' and that it does not justify his giving the 'special concessions'.<sup>71</sup> A factory superintendent warned that the payment of maternity benefit would discourage the employment of women generally in the factories.<sup>72</sup>

According to a family budget survey,<sup>73</sup> of 1500 families of seven main centres of coir production, in Alleppey the average size of the family stood at 5 members. Among the 7893 members comprising the enquiry, the sex ratio stood at 94.69 females to 100 males. Women were employed in large numbers in Alleppey only. Of the 1409 chief earners only 4.8 per cent were women and most of them were in Alleppey where they formed 11.7% of the 515 chief earners. The weekly wage earnings of an Alleppey urban worker was Rs 2.01 and with full time work they could earn from Rs 3 to Rs 10 per week. However, the moopan (contractor) used to extract money from the workers.

The wide prevalence of contract labour affected women workers in particular and in the early forties some of their struggles were directed against the moopans.<sup>74</sup> It was estimated that 90% of the working class families were in debt and the debt per family was almost three times the average income of a family. In 1938, 65.5% of the coir workers were literate.<sup>75</sup> The majority of the workers resided in the villages

adjoining Alleppey. They were tenants and generally owned their hutments which were built on land belonging to landlords to whom rent was paid. This rent was paid in kind and included work like watering of coconut trees for 3 months in the hot season, care of the fruit trees, etc.<sup>76</sup> The lives of Alleppey coir workers were thus inextricably linked with the rural areas.

#### WOMEN IN STRUGGLES

The struggles of coir workers in Alleppey focused on issues concerning the deteriorating conditions in the industry—wage cuts, retrenchment, fines. Occasionally, the specific needs of women workers like maternity benefit was also included.<sup>77</sup> In 1934, following a strike by coir workers in Alleppey, a meeting of women workers from coir factories and women domestic workers was held at Kallarkote. This led to the formation of the *Ambalapuzha Taluk Coir Spinning Workers Union* with K. Devyani as its secretary and Siman Asan as its President. This union of 20 women did not last long as these women also performed agricultural work. In the face of intense exploitation by the landlords, the women agricultural workers at Kallarkote struck work. This led to a raise in their wages from 5 annas to 6 annas and a half hour rest for lunch. The coir workers union led this struggle.<sup>78</sup> The four-week long strike by coir workers in Alleppey not only put them in the forefront of the political movement against the princely ruler of Travancore but also saw the participation of large numbers of women in the struggle. The demands of the strike ranged from the economic—end to wage cuts, retrenchment, the payment of minimum wages, unemployment allowance, free educational facilities for children, medical aid, *maternity benefit*—to the political; recognition of the union, release of political prisoners, withdrawal of ban on Youth League and State Congress and for responsible government.<sup>79</sup>

Women played a crucial role during periods of repression by the military and police on coir workers. They, along with the children formed the crucial communication network through which letters of strike committees, circulars and statements were distributed.<sup>80</sup> When picketing at the factory gates began during the third week of the strike, and the workers were brutally attacked, the women workers move that they would not enter the factory until the strike ended.<sup>81</sup> The strike ended when some demands of the workers were met. The main political gain was the right to organise and bargain.<sup>82</sup>

The radicalisation of the working class and the rise of the socialist leadership over the workers movement began to create the first breach in the social link that the workers had, i.e. their association with the caste organisations. With the rise of bourgeoisie and a salaried class among the Ezhavas, tendencies emerged within the SNDP Yogam to move away from anti-government agitations.<sup>83</sup> Although, the workers did not leave the caste organisations, they began to seek their identity

in the class to which they belonged. For the woman workers, the shift from caste to class organisation had to await the formation of their own organisation in their workplace.

Following the spontaneous and large-scale participation of women in the 1938 strike, the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union (TCFWU) and the Communist unit that led it decided to organise women through their own forums. This led to the decision to organise women's factory committees and also a broad based women's organisation.<sup>84</sup> According to an activist, this move was suggested by P. Krishna Pillai.<sup>85</sup>

#### EMERGENCE OF WOMEN ACTIVISTS

A 13-year old girl, K. Meenakshi, emerged as an activist in 1941 following a strike at Kazhke Darragh Smail Company, a coir manufactory, for *Onam* festival advance. The women refused to leave the factory and it was well past midnight when their demands were conceded.<sup>86</sup> Following this struggle, Meenakshi was often harassed by the employers. She recalled, 'This struggle left a big impression on my mind. The TCFWU suggested that I shift to another company, Aspinwall, where tenting work was going on and where the wages were high. After some time, I became a full-time activist of the TCFWU with a wage of Rs 40 month.'<sup>87</sup>

The same year, a study camp was held at Alleppey<sup>88</sup> by the Communist unit leading the coir workers movement. K. Meenakshi recalls that it was at this camp, attended by other women like Devyani, Lakshmikutty, Gomati and Dakshyani, that the decision to carry on special work among women was worked out. Meenakshi and Gomati were to organise women workers through women's factory committees—a kind of shop-floor level organisation. Devyani, Dakshyani and Lakshmikutty were to build a broad-based women's organisation.<sup>89</sup> During the 7-day camp, they all lived in a commune. At another study camp held at Calicut soon after, the perspective of the women's movement was discussed. Among the 208 women who participated were Bhavaniamma from Kottayam, P. Yashoda from Kanoor and Aryapallam from Palghat. According to a woman participant K. Devyani, following the camp they all began to consider themselves 'as soldiers for communism and were prepared to start work on a war footing.'<sup>90</sup>

Full time organisational work by women activists, particularly if they were unmarried, raised new problems. K. Meenakshi, for example, lived with her mother and sister and would return home escorted by male colleagues. The TCFWU looked around for support as the neighbourhood was not too kind to her. This they found in an older activist of the SNDP Vanitha Samajam, Kalikutty Assatty. Kalikutty agreed to provide shelter to Meenakshi whenever she required it on the condition that Meenakshi was accompanied by a

male colleague known to her. This was necessary for her own survival as she herself was a widow and lived with her sister and her child. This support that Kalikutty provided to K. Meenakshi and TCFWU brought her into the working class movement. With her organisational experience within the SNDP earlier, she played a crucial role in building up the women's organisation.<sup>91</sup> At another time, K. Meenakshi shifted into the house of a woman activist in Alleppey, Gomati, who had two children and whose husband was working with the organisation elsewhere. This enabled them mutual support to go out to organise women workers.<sup>92</sup> K. Meenakshi joined the Communist cell of 5 members. Her mother and sister earned the family income from coir spinning.

#### WOMEN'S FACTORY COMMITTEES

Since 1941, women workers began to be organised on issues such as arbitrary dismissal from work, wage cut, maternity benefit and creche facilities and harassment by *moopans*. Women's factory committees also began to be set up. Among the early struggles conducted by women were on the issue of maternity benefit. An employer in the Darragh Smail Company argued that since women became pregnant at home, the management was not responsible for any maternity benefit payment. The women retorted that they did not work to please the management but to give themselves and their children a better life. Besides, they added, their work in the factory affected their health during pregnancy while it increased the company's profits.<sup>93</sup> During 1944-45 about 288 cases of maternity benefit were taken up by the TCFWU and all were paid Rs 0.49 per day for two months.<sup>94</sup> This was in contrast with Cochin where a Maternity Benefit Bill was in existence but because of the lack of a trade union movement, the large number of women workers were deprived of any such benefit.

In 1942, struggles were conducted on the issue of dismissal of women workers in Goodacre Company and against the abusive language used by the *moopans*. In the former struggle, women continued their agitation despite the presence of the police. In their struggle against the *moopans*, women retaliated by filling their betel boxes with stones and throwing them at the *moopans* when they abused any woman. According to K. Meenakshi, this led to a reduction in such practices by *moopans*.<sup>95</sup> In 1943, the issue of equal wages was taken up in a factory and the union agreed to settle for a lower wage if a uniform rate was fixed.<sup>96</sup>

#### WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

The establishment of factory committees created the base for workers' democracy, gave the workers both political and administrative experience. These committees consisted of representatives from each department of a factory and a convener elected from the committee.

The factory committees negotiated disputes with departmental superintendents and if that failed with the management directly. The setting up of women's factory committees led them to recognise their own capacity to exercise power as well as the responsibility for the direction of their lives. Also, it led to their awareness of the need for unity against repression and wage slavery. In these struggles women realised their crucial role, acquired a new knowledge about their immediate and future activity.<sup>97</sup>

Factory Committees of TCFWU 1942-1945

	1942-1943			1944-1945		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No. of factory committee	30	15	45	112	30	142
No. of members of factory committees	461	101	562	673	125	798
No. of general body meetings of factory committees	56	40	96	57	51	108
No. of individual factory committee meetings	324	144	468	859	511	1370
No. of factory level general body meetings of workers	355	181	536	971	121	1092

Source: TCFWU *Anchamathu Varshika* Report and TCFWU *Ezhmathu Varishika* Report.

The conveners of the women's factory committees and their leading organisers were: VJ Aleamma (Kadapura Darragh Smail Co.), Ammini (Kazhke Darragh Smail Co.), Mariamma (Volkart Brothers), Janaki (Aspinwall), Marykutty (KS Gangadhar Co.), Madhavi (Bombay Co.), VS Sarada (William Goodacre Co.), Mary (Empire Coir Works).<sup>98</sup> For the women workers, these committees began to take over the functions earlier performed by caste organisations. Apart from issues of work, the women's factory committees discussed problems of wife-beating, desertion and husbands preventing women's political participation.<sup>99</sup> It was participation and experience of building women's factory committees that enabled women activists like K. Meenakshi to represent the TCFWU at a tripartite labour conference. She recalled, 'I went in a rickshaw. The brisk and bold manner in which I jumped down from the rickshaw surprised those present. When the negotiations failed, the Labour Commissioner threatened that workers would be beaten and bled to death. My blood boiled at this threat, I banged on the table and shouted, 'We may bleed, but we will fight and win' They were speechless as I walked out of the

meeting'.<sup>100</sup> Along with the annual conferences of the TCFWU, conferences of women workers were also organised.<sup>101</sup>

#### WOMEN'S ORGANISATION

It was the TCFWU which initiated the building of a women's organisation. It has, therefore, been termed as the 'mother' of the women's movement in Travancore.<sup>102</sup> In the early forties, an activist recalls, a 2-day meeting was held at the TCFWU Cultural Centre's room. The need for a women's organisation was stressed by S. Kumaran. He said that women were slaves in all spheres and there was a need to build a new society in which women were emancipated.<sup>103</sup> Among those who became active in organising women were Arundhati, Gomati, Laxmikutty, Kalikutty Assatty, K. Meenakshi and 4-5 girls from workers' families.<sup>104</sup> In 1943, as part of the anti-Japanese propaganda work, they campaigned from house to house, often singing songs. However, the focus of their campaign were on issues of women's freedom, equal wages and the provision of educational facilities for poor girls.<sup>105</sup>

The first demonstration of 300 women was held in Alleppey and among its leading participants were Gomati, Kalikutty Assatty and K. Meenakshi.<sup>106</sup> The procession evoked comments from some of the men present, such as 'All of you men better go home and cook, the women all are taking to demonstrations'.<sup>107</sup> Another demonstration was attacked by a hoodlum of a coir employer and a woman worker who caught hold of his collar was hurt and hospitalised.<sup>108</sup> The *Ambalapuzha Taluk Mahila Sangam* was formed in 1943 with Kalikutty Assatty as its President and K. Meenakshi as its General Secretary.<sup>109</sup> A conference was held at Kadangaparambu presided over by K.R. Gouri, and addressed by P. Vishalakshmi. Among the issues discussed were that of maternity benefit, the political situation arising from the Dewan's repressive rule, and need for responsible government.<sup>110</sup> Local units of the organisation sprung up from Thottapalli to Mararikulam.<sup>111</sup> According to its first President, the Communist Party provided the 'shelter and support' for the women's organisation and in all workers struggles, the women's organisation was present.<sup>112</sup> Women activists like K. Meenakshi also organised other sections of women, like spice workers and agricultural workers.<sup>113</sup>

Another activity that the TCFWU developed was at the cultural level—the *Thozhilali Samskarika Kendra* (workers cultural centre) which had an impact on workers' families and girls in particular.<sup>114</sup> Girls from coir workers' families performed plays and sang songs. For the first time women participated in public meetings. At the start of a meeting, progressive songs would be sung by women. A crowd would gather and a meeting would be held. Among those active in the cultural activities were Medini, Anusuya, a dancer, and K. Meenakshi.<sup>115</sup>



The multiplicity of activities held by the TCFWU touched every aspect of working class life. For women activists, it provided new dimensions to the role that they performed. According to K. Meenakshi, 'The activities of the TCFWU were so wide ranging, that there was hardly anything that we did not do. In fact, I was acting General Secretary of the TCFWU for a short while too. It gave us confidence. There was no one to show us how to do things. We worked things out, we set up precedents'.<sup>116</sup>

Despite a ban on mass organisations during the Punnappra Vayalar armed struggle, women workers participated in solidarity actions in large numbers. Many were tortured, arrested and raped by the police during house to house raids.<sup>117</sup> Several activists of the women's organisation and the union went underground. However, the severe repression and ban on organisations affected the struggles of all workers. Also, the structural changes in the coir industry from the later part of the forties affected the struggles, in particular the struggles of women workers. Even as coir capitalists began to withdraw from direct management to become merchant shippers, large-scale manufactories began to close down, leading to retrenchment of workers. Small scale coir weaving establishments grew in the rural areas, leading to a gradual shift of the industry from Alleppey to the adjoining rural areas. These structural changes in the industry dispersed the workers. This dispersal of production units also contributed to the loss of their political base. It drove a large number of women workers to a marginalised existence in which activism would be virtually impossible. Only some of the women activists continued their political work, shifting the base of their activity to other areas. Their association with the Communist Party ensured this shift. The loss of their political base was a setback to a large section of women workers. Women activists from East Bengal recalled a similar experience. The partition of Bengal, according to them, disrupted their family economics—forcing all of them into taking up some work for family survival. This compulsion, added to the loss of their political base in East Bengal, virtually ended their active involvement in politics. Their withdrawal was not due to any loss of commitment or interest.<sup>118</sup>

#### EMERGING ISSUES

The revolutionary role of a new production relation, while struggling against an old, ossified social order which acts as a break on social progress, cannot but be emphasised. The social reformers, some of them influenced by romantic ideals, western literature and education, etc, articulated this need for change. For women, the relative liberation from certain social shackles—monogamy, simplification of marriage rites, right to education, removal of restrictions on clothes and jewellery, etc. was accompanied by loss in the realm of property rights. The theoretical issue that emerges is whether patriarchy and

patrilineal forms of property are integral to capitalism. In the case of Kerala, pre-capitalist social formations had both matrilineal and patrilineal property rights. Does the freely exchangeable private property require patriarchy? If so, why? Does the shift from matriliney to patriliney involve a weakening of the caste structures and the emergence of class structures and consciousness. Our study indicates that this is by no means a linear process and that the role played by conscious political intervention is of crucial significance. For women, the structural aspects of employment outside the home provided the basis for a revaluation of women's sex roles and identity. The struggle for equal wages, maternity benefit, etc, were linked with the general perception among the Communists about the significance of women's economic independence. However, these ideas took a concrete shape only with the specific organisation of women as *women workers*, i.e. in the women's factory committees. Women's participation in the union led to an awareness of the barriers to women's political participation—lack of community support, women's subordinate position within the family. Even as the perspective of new social roles for women began to take concrete shape, there were structural constraints to its development. Women workers formed a small percentage of the coir work force, the technical base of production was still hand production, production relations being similar to the early stages of capitalist manufacture. This imposed significant limitations on the working class movement itself and on the women's movement in particular.

## NOTES

1. Jayawardena, Kumari: *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, Kali for Women, Delhi, 1986.
2. Klienberg, Jay S. (ed): *Retrieving Women's History*, Berg, UNESCO, 1988.
3. Thompson, Dorothy: *The Chartist: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984.
4. Rose, O. Sonya: Gender at Work, *History Workshop*, Issue 21, Spring 1986, pp. 113–131.
5. Tilly, Louise A: Gender, Women's History, Social History, *Social Science History*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1989, Duke University Press, pp. 439–462.
6. Madras Native Newspaper Reports, *Kerala Patrika*, 31 May, 1930, 23 May, 1931, *Malabar Quarterly Review*, 1903, Tamilnadu Archives.
7. Menon, Chandu: *Indulekha* (Mal), National Book Stall, 1981 Edition, Kottayam. First published in 1889.
8. Namboodiripad, EMS: *Kerala Society and Politics*, National Book Centre, Delhi, 1984, pp. 103–105.
9. Isaac, Thomas: *The Emergence of Radical Working Class Movement in Alleppey*, CDS Working Paper No. 175, Trivandrum, 1983.
10. Travancore Government English Records, Political Dept., Cover No. 8338, P. Parameshwaran to KK Rao, Dewan, 8 January, 1903.
11. Velayudhan, PS: *SNDP Charithram*, (Mal), Quilon, 1978, pp. 122–130.
12. Ibid.
13. Rao, MSA: *Tradition, Rationality and Change*, Bombay, 1972, pp. 125–30.

14. Achyuthan, KR: The Social Spectrum in Kerala, *Journal of Kerala Studies*, X, Part 1-4, 1983, pp. 11-62.
15. Nair, K Ramachandran (ed): *Selected Poems of Kumaran Asan*, Kerala Univ., Trivandrum, 1975, pp. 124.
16. Ibid, pp. 124.
17. Ibid, pp. 133.
18. Ibid, pp. 129.
19. Devyani, K: *Choarayum Kaneerum Nananha Vazhikal* (Mal), Chintha Publishers Trivandrum, 1989.
20. Goerge, KM: *Kumaran Asan*, Sahitya Akademi, 1972, 1984, Delhi, pp. 69.
21. Achyuthan, KR: The Social Spectrum in Kerala, *Journal of Kerala Studies* X, Part 1-4, 1983, pp. 11-62.
22. Female deities and different forms of Mother Goddess, the Protector.
23. Achyuthan, KR: The Social Spectrum in Kerala, *Journal of Kerala Studies* X, Part 1-4, 1983, pp. 11-62.
24. Assatty, Kalikutty, *Mahila Sangam, Innu, Innile, Nale* (Mal), TCFWU Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1972, pp. 127-30.
25. Velayudhan, PS: *SNDP Charithram*, (Mal), Quilon, 1978, pp. 105 quoting N. Kumaran's reminiscences.
26. Ibid.
27. Assatty, Kalikutty: *Mahila Sangam, Innu, Innile, Nale* (Mal), TCFWU Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1972, pp. 127-30.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Vaikom Satyagraha File No. 605, Vol. 1, pp. 8, Judicial Section. ERC, Trivandrum.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Correspondence relating to Vaikom Satyagraha, Vol. VI, pp. 328, Judl. Sec. ERC, Trivandrum.
39. Vaikom Satyagraha File No. 605, Vol. X, Letter of PK Govinda Pillai, editor 'Subhashini', ERC, Trivandrum.
40. Vaikom Satyagraha File No. 605, Vol. 5, ERC Trivandrum.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. The Hindu, 26 April, 1931, pp. 3.
45. Ibid.
46. The Hindu, May 27, 1931, pp. 14.
47. Ibid.
48. The Hindu, May 16, 1930, pp. 6.
49. The Hindu, Feb. 5, 1931, pp. 12.
50. Ibid.
51. The Hindu, Jan. 22, 1931, pp. 14.
52. The Hindu, May 30, 1931, pp. 12.
53. Madhavan, E: *Swatantra Samudayam* (Mal), Trivandrum, 1979.
54. Perumal, Nilkan: *Truth About Travancore*, Madras, RJ Ram & Co. 1939, p. 54.
55. Kerala Kaumudi, May 30, 1937, Trivandrum, Report of the 12th Annual Conference of TLA.
56. Isaac, Thomas: *Class Struggle and Industrial Structure: A study of Coir Weaving Industry in Kerala*: Ph.D. thesis, CDS, Trivandrum, 1984.
57. Sharma, Shri Ram; *Coir Spinning in Malabar*, Norman Printing Bureau, Calicut, 1917, pp. 5.
58. Ibid, pp. 6.
59. Ibid, pp. 7.
60. Ibid.

61. Langley, WKH: *Century in Malabar*; the History of Pierce Leslie and Co. Ltd, 1862-1962, Madras.
62. Isaac, Thomas, TM: *Class Struggle and Transition to Specifically Capitalist Form of Production*—Paper presented at Marx Centenary Seminar organised by Social Scientist, October 1983, Delhi.
63. *Report of the Board of Conciliation of Trade Disputes in Mats and Matting Industry*, 1939, Trivandrum. Henceforth to be referred as BCTDMMI.
64. Statistics of Travancore 113 ME/1938-39, Trivandrum Govt. Press, 1939.
65. Mukhtar, Ahmed: *Report on Labour Conditions in Coir Mats and Matting Industry*, Govt. of India Press, Simla, 1945, pp. 8.
66. Ibid, pp. 24.
67. BCTDMMI, 1939, Trivandrum, pp. 22.
68. BCTDMMI, 1939, Trivandrum, pp. 17.
69. Ibid, pp. 26.
70. Ibid, pp. 31.
71. Ibid, pp. 39.
72. Ibid, pp. 17.
73. Ibid, pp. 185-221.
74. K. Meenakshi, taped interview, February 1983, Alleppey.
75. BCTDMMI Report, pp. 201, Trivandrum 1939.
76. Mukhtar, Ahmed: *Report on Labour Conditions in Coir Mats and Matting Industry*, Govt. of India Press, Simla, 1945, pp. 31.
77. R. Prakasam: *Keralathila Trade Union Prasthanithinte Charitram* (Mal), Trivandrum, 1979.
78. Devyani, K: *Choarayum Kaneerum Nananha Vazhikal* (Mal), Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 1989.
79. Krishnan, TV: *Kerala's First Communist*, Life of Sahavu Krishna Pillai Communist Party Publication, 1971, pp. 52.
80. Ibid, pp. 56.
81. Ibid, pp. 59.
82. Ibid, pp. 62.
83. ERC, Coffdl. Sec, No.D.Dis, 4098/44, Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of SNDP Yogam (Shertallai), February 1940.
84. Assatty, Kalikutty: *Mahila Sangam, Innu, Innile, Nale*, (Mal), TCFWU Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1972, pp. 127-30.
85. Kunjan, KK, Secy, TCFWU interviewd in August 1982, Alleppey.
86. Meenakshi, K: Taped interview, February 1983, Alleppey.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Devyani, K: *Choarayum Kaneerum Nananha Vazhikal* (Mal), Chintha Pub, Trivandrum, 1989.
91. Meenakashi, K: Taped interview, February 1983, Alleppey.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Kunjan, KK: Interview, August 1982.
97. Meenakshi, K: Taped interview, February 1983, Alleppey.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Kunjan, KK: Interview, August 1982, Alleppey.
102. Assatty, Kalikutty: *Mahila Sangam, Innu, Innile, Nale* (Mal), TCFWU Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1972, pp. 127-30.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Meenakshi, K: Taped interview, February, 1983, Alleppey.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.

109. Assatty, Kalikutty: *Mahila Sangam, Innu, Innile, Nale* (Mal), TCFWU Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1972, pp. 127-30.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Meenakshi, K: Taped interview, February 1983, Alleppey.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Assatty, Kalikutty: Women and the Punnappa Freedom Struggle (Mal), *NFIW 10th Congress Mahila Souvenir*, 1980.
118. Statements by women activists who participated in the freedom struggle during a seminar held at Calcutta by Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi, January, 1983.

V. RAMAKRISHNA\*

## *Women's Journals in Andhra During the Nineteenth Century*

This paper is an attempt to analyse the women's journals in Andhra during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>1</sup> To what extent the journals published during the hey day of social and religious movements in the region reflected the contemporary reform movements is the main concern. At this time new forms in Telugu literature such as story, farce (burlesque), novel, drama and essay were emerging as important literary expressions. They provided a powerful medium for the expression of reform ideas as the reformers and modernists of the period profusely made use of these forms. These forms helped the expression and dissemination of ideas of reform and modernism. Also, the prose style in Telugu underwent a healthy change from that of 'Grandhika' (bookish and Pedantic) to 'Vyavaharika' (spoken), even though the transformation was a long and arduous process. This change symbolised the democratisation of the language when an increasing percentage of people, from the ranks of educated middle classes, were being drawn into social and political activities.

The growth of journalism in Andhra during the nineteenth century has to be viewed in the above context of changes taking place in both languages and literature. Several parts of India witnessed, during this period, starting of a number of vernacular journals and, as a part of this, Telugu journalism made its beginning in 1850s.<sup>2</sup> The early activity of the Telugu printing, associated with the College of Fort. St. George at Madras (established in 1812), provided the necessary atmosphere for the emergence of Telugu journalism. The College was established for training civilians in the vernaculars of the Presidency. A press, book depot and also a library were attached to it.<sup>3</sup> Further, in the wake of the missionary activities, availability of a good number of printing presses in Madras city facilitated the journalistic ventures.

*Vrittantini* was the first known Telugu journal, published from Madras in 1838. Not much is known about it, even though it is agreed

---

\* Department of History, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

upon that it continued its publication till 1842.<sup>4</sup> A mention is found about *Vrittantini* in *Varthamanatarangini*, a journal launched in 1842 from Madras,<sup>5</sup> followed by *Hitavadi* (1862), *Dinavarthamani* (1862), *Sriyakshni* (1863), *Tatwabodhini* (1864), *Sujanaranjani* (1864), *Andhra Bhashasanjivani* (1871) and *Purusharthapradayini* (1872).<sup>6</sup> Religious and literary issues and also occasional articles on matters of public and political interest found place in the columns of these journals. But *Purusharthapradayini*, which preceded immediately Veeresalingam's own journal *Vivekavardhani*, made a mark in Telugu journalism. It was a full-fledged journal (published from Masulipatam) which levelled powerful criticism of social problems such as caste system, idolatry, prohibition of widow remarriages and the like. It was a forward looking journal in more than one respect and served as a model for Veeresalingam's journals.<sup>7</sup>

*Vivekavardhani* of Veeresalingam commenced its epoch-making career in October 1874. It was a monthly publication from Rajahmundry, though it was, for some period, printed in Madras and later on shifted to Rajamundry.<sup>8</sup> With the publication of *Vivekavardhani*, it may be stated, Telugu journalism attained maturity and respectability. A number of journals such as *Andhra Prakasika* (1885), *Hindujana Samskarini* (1885), *Satya Samvardhani* (1891), *Sasilekha* (1894), *Desabhimani* (1896) came to be published during the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Without exception, all these journals carried on a crusade against social evils and championed the cause of women in particular by focussing attention on their problems. Articles and comments concerning these issues were published in addition to the reporting of news items relating to the reform activities. Some of the journals, mentioned above, were focussing attention on public issues such as irrigation, land revenue, education, public health and such other issues. Proceedings of the District conferences, which were regularly meeting from 1892 onwards, were being reported in the columns of these journals and a mine of information is available on these aspects in the reports of the Native Newspapers of the period.<sup>10</sup>

*Satihitabodhini*, a journal exclusively meant for women, was published in 1883 from Rajahmundry. Keeping in view the above background of the publication of a number of reform journals, the starting of journal for women was a logical development. The social movements, whose central concern, as we have earlier observed, was woman and her problems. The movements were active during this period and hence the decision of Veeresalingam to start *Satihitabodhini* and be its editor too. Except a few issues, the full file of the journal is not available. However, the important articles published in its columns are reproduced in the complete works of Veeresalingam as he was the author of many of the articles published in it. The journal carried, on its cover page, a sloka the meaning of which is as follows:

Women forcibly confined to homes by their men are not well protected. Whereas, women who take care of themselves have better protection and safety.<sup>12</sup>

Considering the level of enlightenment and awareness of men and women, this was a somewhat radical pronouncement as it exhorted women, although indirectly, not to depend upon men but to be independent. Looked from a critical angle, the contents of the journal show that they mainly concentrated on education for women, (the major and favourite theme of the nineteenth century reform movements), moral tales, proper upkeep of homes and a few literary items. But, what is particularly significant in this context is the attempt made to educate women, through the articles, in matters of elementary science such as health of women and upbringing of children. That these articles—almost all of them—were written by men, in particular by Kandukuri Veeresalingam, should be viewed in the context that women were yet to become active in reform and journalism. More significantly, the rate of literacy among women was rather low, only 0.48 per cent in 1901.

The life of *Satihitabodhini* was short and, after three years, it was discontinued in 1885. However, it was renewed in 1888 and was later merged with another women's journal, *Telugu Zenana*.<sup>13</sup>

*Telugu Zenana* started in 1893, was the second Telugu women's journal. A journal exclusively meant for middle and upper class women of late nineteenth century Andhra, as its name indicated, it was intended to reach those women in seclusion. A monthly, *Telugu Zenana*, was exclusively meant for the education, enlightenment and emancipation of women.<sup>14</sup> The reformers of the nineteenth century held a strong and almost fanatical belief that education would dispel the ignorance and superstitious beliefs among women. It was considered a sure way of bringing enlightenment to them. Accordingly, the columns of *Telugu Zenana* or, for that matter, any women's journal of the period, was allotting more space to this aspect. Also, articles stressing the need for 'good conduct' of women and their routine health problems were being published. 'Good conduct' was perceived not as a moral or ethical question pertaining to women's behaviour but, taken broadly, as the spirit of adjustment and accommodation in living with other members of the family and more in relation with their partners.

*Telugu Zenana*, considering its inspiring editorials and wide coverage of contents and commitment, became the main focus of women's activities, issues and controversies. In fact, a good number of women were found contributing to it and some of them later became accomplished writers and also founders of women's journals independently, without the active association of men.<sup>15</sup>

We have evidence that, in 1893, Rapaka Kowsthubham from Kakinada started a women's journal *Stree Hitabodhini* though,



Unfortunately, no copies of the journal are available.<sup>16</sup> Another journal, *Sri Balika*, published in 1896, from the northern most town of coastal Andhra, Srikakulam, also had a male editor, Sangitarao Bapiraju, a lawyer by profession. A few issues of *Sri Balika* are available and they show that most of the contents are written by men and they deal with, like other journals of the period, women's education, conduct and small stories with morals, health and hygiene etc.<sup>17</sup>

After the turn of the century, the trend of Telugu journalism was increasingly becoming political in its tone. The emergence of political press, along with the growth of nationalist militancy, did undermine, to an extent, the effectiveness of the social movements in Andhra. The role of editor assumed greater importance to that of the publisher. Political groups emerged evincing interest in the editing and publication of journals. Acquiring a new emphasis and also a new direction, political and social issues had, to a great extent, replaced the plea for social reforms. Nevertheless, the new political atmosphere did not deter the efforts of some people in starting journals for women.

The dawn of the twentieth century, however, witnessed a new trend in that the first journal for women edited by a women editor, was started in 1902 from Kakinada. It was *Hindu Sundari* and its editor, Mosalakanti Ramabai.<sup>18</sup> One of the noteworthy features of this periodical was that, with few interruptions, it was published till 1945. It earned the reputation of publishing popular literature in the form of stories, songs and other items of general interest.<sup>19</sup>

*Grihalakshmi* was the next journal to start in 1903 from Eluru in Godavari district. It was the first illustrative journal in Telugu and also it had the distinction of publishing a few articles in each issue meant exclusively for children.<sup>20</sup>

Founded in 1904 and published from Kakinada, *Savithri* was edited by a woman activist, Pulugurtha Lakshminarasamamba. She was one of the few women who came under the influence of Veeresalingam and involved herself deeply in women's activities.<sup>21</sup> It goes to the credit of Lakshminarasamamba for organising a women students' Association at Kakinada. *Savitri's* contributions to women's journalism were many. For the first time, a number of contributions by women writers found a place in it. Since it focussed attention on several issues championed by social movements, it got the distinction of being the comprehensive women's journal of the times.<sup>22</sup>

Mention should be made of the two women's journals published by Christian missionaries, *Vivekavathi* (1908) and *Intimations to Women* (1912) from Madras and Guntur, respectively. Apart from working for the general enlightenment among women, these two journals were pro-Christian in their views and were encouraging the proselytisation activities of the missionaries indirectly.<sup>23</sup>

*Anasuya* (1914), published from Kakinada, the centre of reform activity, followed the tradition of *Savithri* in having a woman editor, Vinjamoori Venkataramanamma. It was a strong supporter of women's cause. To promote love of learning and with the lofty aim of introducing a few significant literary works to promote knowledge among women, *Anasuya* introduced the scheme of holding periodical tests for women in some well known literary works.<sup>24</sup>

Two more journals, *Stri Dharma* (Madras 1917) and *Soundarya Vatili* (Madras, 1919), edited by Malati Patwardhan and Gadicherla Ramabai respectively were published before 1920s. They were of the same genre as others of the period.<sup>25</sup>

The period between 1883 and 1919, from *Satihita Bodhini* to *Soundaryavalli*, was a very significant phase in women's journalism in Telugu. About ten journals were started, some edited by men and some other by women. About twelve journals such as *Andhra Lakshmi* (1921), *Hindu Yuvathi* (1923), *Bharatha Mahila* (1925), *Grihalakshmi* (1927), *Viswagnani*, *Yasoda* (1930), *Andhra Mahila* (1944) etc., were published between 1920 and 1947.<sup>26</sup> In view of the increasing momentum of the national movement, they were advocating for more participation of women in freedom struggle. The early journals discussed primarily the issues concerning various facets of women's education, social reforms and the needs of women in general. However, the journals of the later period (after 1920), discussed in addition to the above, issues concerning freedom of women and political developments in the country. Political problems did not find place in the columns of the earlier journals. By the time, the *Grihalakshmi* and the *Andhra Mahila* were published, separate Andhra province movement at the regional level and freedom movement at the national level assumed greater force and significance. Consequently, participation of women in these movements also increased and, therefore, political discussions found place in the women's journals, in addition to the discussion of reform matters.

The early period of women's journalism (1883–1919) coincided with the most active phase of the reform movements in Andhra. This explains, to a great extent, success of the journals in playing a crucial role in furthering the cause of social reform, in particular the cause of women, which constituted the major component of the reform movements. If women's journals are considered as the products of the successful efforts of the reformers, the journals were performing the most important function of supplementing the reformers' endeavours by disseminating their ideas through their columns. The emergence of women's journals was indeed a glorious tribute to the reform movements which created enlightenment and achieved social progress. Furthermore, the period witnessed a rich crop of vernacular tracts by women. They focussed on the problems such as education, marriage, and 'social purity'. Establishment of girls' schools by public-minded

philanthropists, arranging lectures, organising conferences and establishing associations were some of the notable features of this period.<sup>27</sup> The first All-Andhra Women's Conference was held at Guntur in 1910. Pulugurtha Lakshminarasamamba, the editor of 'Savithri', presided over the conference.

A subtle distinction could be perceived between the journals edited by men and women, even though both the categories did strive for the common cause of enlightenment among women. Instructional and sermonising tone could be noticed in the male-edited journals whereas the journals edited by women were more positive in their expression of support to women's rightful place, though appeared to be less assertive in their views. Further, it is observed, that journals edited by men were writing less about the problems confronting women. Their main emphasis appears to be on topics such as 'Chastity', 'House-keeping', 'Frugality' etc. On the other hand, women-edited journals discussed the issues like infant marriages, condition of widows, need for women teachers to teach children, child birth and child care etc. A significant observation, in this context, is that these journals consisted of articles written more by women. There was a marked increase of women writers by this time. Women's journals, more often than not, became platforms of controversial issues. Discussions through correspondence were carried out in their columns. It may also be stated that in the view of male-edited journals, women were 'ignorant' and 'superstitious' and hence the need to educate and reform them. However, this view was not shared by the journals edited by women. They perceived women as 'weak' (*abala*) and 'exploited' and hence the need to enable her assert freedom and resist exploitation. However, their lack of assertiveness in the tone of their writings, particularly during the early phase, could be due to their maiden entry not only into public life but into professions such as journalism which were hitherto the exclusive preserve of men.

To what extent these journals perceived and reflected the ideas of reform movements of the period is a significant question that needs explanation. That these journals were providing space to the reporting of the items of the reform endeavours, meetings, lectures, etc., is already mentioned. However, reformers of the period had the most impressive agenda of transforming the society from its feudal components of culture and social customs such as caste, 'Devadasi' system and, of course, to strive for the progress of women. However, as it happened in other parts of the country, advocates of reform in Andhra also concentrated their attention primarily on the issues concerning women, viz., education, marriage problem in its entirety and an overall improvement in their status. These issues were prominently reflected in women's journals.

In dealing with issues concerning women, these journals adopted almost the same attitude of condemnation of social evils such as 'Kanyasulkam' (bride-price), infant marriages, prohibition of widow

remarriages, etc. What they wanted under women's education was not the acquisition of mere literary skills but the emphasis was on the learning of domestic crafts and skills such as sewing, knitting, house-keeping and cultivation of fine arts like music and painting. In this, they surely displayed a more progressive approach towards the development of a cultured and independent existence of women in the society. Their approach towards learning of history and general literature was meant more for the growth of the total personality of women. In highlighting the issues like need for education, principles of general health and hygiene, upbringing of children, good conduct, etc., the intentions of the editors were the true reflection of the views of the contemporary reformers who wished to make women cultivate elements of culture and modern living and wean them away from ignorance and gossip. This was a part of the wider process of modernization of which preparing women to play their equal role with men was an integral part.

The travails of women's journals included their limited circulation and the resultant financial problems, besides the dependence of women editors on men particularly in printing the journals. Nevertheless, these constraints did not stop their publication. On the other hand, they continued their relentless struggle against social evils and made singular contribution in the spread of enlightenment among women during the historic phase of transition in Indian society. In conclusion we can say that the impact of women's journals on the consciousness of women was positive. But the question is not about its positive nature. The consciousness 'remained within the contours of bourgeois ideology articulated by the petty bourgeois male reformers in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth centuries'.<sup>28</sup>

#### NOTES

1. The present paper is the revised version of an earlier paper presented to the Indian History Congress, Golden Jubilee Session at Goa in 1987. I would like to thank Prof. K.N. Panikkar, Centre for Historical Studies, J.N.U. for a discussion on the subject.
2. C.P. Brown wrote in the introduction to his *Telugu-English Dictionary* that among the Telugus 'printing commenced about the year 1806 but made little progress till 1830. About 1835 some of the Telugu and Sanskrit poems were printed at Madras'. See C.P. Brown, *Telugu-English Dictionary*, Hyderabad, 1966, preface p.X. The dictionary was first published in 1852.
3. See D.V. Savarao's article, 'The Beginnings of Telugu Journalism', in *Journalism in Andhra Pradesh* (a brief survey prepared and published by Hyderabad Union of Journalists), Hyderabad, 1987, pp. 23-40. Some of the books printed during the period from 1812 to 1835 were, A.D. Cambell's *Telugu Grammar* in 1816, Williams Brown's *Telugu Grammar* in 1817, *Andhra Deepika* of Mamidi Venkayya, Vedanta Pattabhi Rama Sastry's *Dhatumala*, Ravipati Gurumurthy Sastry's *Vikramarka Kathalu* (Tales of Vikramarka), C.P. Brown's *Analysis of Telugu Prosody*. Also see for an interesting account of the period, K. Veerabhadra Rao, *Influence of English on Telugu Literature* (Telugu); Hyderabad, 1986, (first edn. 1960), Chapter II, Sections 1 and 2.

4. G. Krishna's article, 'An overview of Telugu Journalism' in *Journalism in Andhra Pradesh*, op.cit., pp. 1-22.
5. It was a monthly journal in Telugu. An article published in its columns attacking the practice of engaging nautch parties and spending money lavishly during wedding festivities was later on included in *Gadyachintamani* (Anthology of Telugu prose) by the ardent advocate and leader of the movement for spoken dialect in Telugu, Gidugu Venkata Ramamoorthy Pantulu. See D.V. Sivarao's article, op.cit., p. 26.
6. See Bangorey's article 'Nellore Patrikala Charitra' (Telugu) in *Vikramasimhapuri Mandala Sarvaswamu*, Nellore, 1963. Also Bangorey, *Brown Jabulu, Telugu Journalism Charitra*, (Brown's letters, History of Telugu Journalism), (Telugu), Nellore, 1973, pp. 9-11.
7. D.V. Sivarao, op.cit., p. 29. Veeresalingam was a regular contributor to this journal. Two of his earlier poetical works were published in it.
8. G. Krishna's article, op.cit.
9. Bangorey's article, op.cit.
10. See chapter on 'Other Reform Movements' in V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1848-1919)*, Ph.D. thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1977.
11. V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 94.
12. See the cover page of *Satihita Bodhini*, vol. 3, No. 7.
13. D. Padmavathy *Aspashta Pratibimbata* (Unclear Images), (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1989, p. 40.
14. See Tarakam's article, 'Contribution of Telugu Journalism to Social and Religious Reform' in K.R. Seshagiri Rao, ed., *Studies in the History of Telugu Journalism*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 103. The journal was edited by Rayasam Venkatasivudu and also Veeresalingam.
15. See for example a few issues of *Telugu Zenana* of 1899, 1900. The names of Kotikalapudi Seethamma, Mosalkanti Ramabayamma are mentioned in this regard.
16. Tarakan's article, op.cit., p. 92.
17. Ibid., p. 93.
18. See T. Ramachandra Rao's article, 'Women's Journals', in K.R. Seshagiri Rao, ed., op.cit., p. 125.
19. The journal was published from three places Eluru, Kanteru and Kakinada. It had different editors namely, Mosalakanti Ramabai, Madabhushi Chudamma and Kallepalli Venkatamanamma. See for details the back numbers of the journal October-November, 1905 and 1913. See for details, D. Padmavathy, op.cit., pp. 43-44.
20. See V. Lakshmana Reddy, *Telugu Journalism (Avatarana Vikasam)*, (Telugu) (The origin and growth of *Telugu Journalism*), Vijayawada, 1985, p. 250.
21. See for details V. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p. 99. Also see Vasanthalakshmi's article, 'Women's Magazines' in *Journalism in Andhra Pradesh*, op.cit., pp. 73-79.
22. Details of the women writers of the period are given in V. Ramakrishna, op.cit., pp. 100-102. Also for further particulars see the available issues of *Savithri* of the years 1904, 1907 and 1911.
23. *Vivekavati* was started by Madras Christian Literature Society in 1908. On its cover page it carried a motto that 'A virtuous Woman is more precious than a pearl'. *Intimations to women* was edited by Lady E.S. Maceulay. See for details D. Padmavathy, op.cit., pp. 45-46.
24. Venkataramanamma was the sister of the well-known modern poet Devulapalli Venkata Krishna Sastry who was a student of Raghupati Venkataratnam at Kakinada and also a follower in Brahmoism. He wrote a number of Brahmo devotional songs published in a book form called *Mahati*, Guntur, 1949.
25. V. Lakshmana Reddy, op.cit., p. 266.
26. D. Padmavathy, op.cit.
27. V. Ramakrishna, op.cit., p. 95.
28. For a discussion on this see Atlury Murali, 'Perspectives on women's liberation' in *Studies in History*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 97-120. See also, in this context, Vir Bharat Talwar's article, 'Feminist 1920' in Kunkum Songari and Sudesh Vaid, ed., *Recasting Women*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 204-232.

CHARU GUPTA\*

## *Portrayal of Women in Premchand's Stories: A Critique\*\**

### INTRODUCTION

The need for women's history is now recognised to a certain extent. A focus on women leads to the articulation of gender as a category of historical analysis, and to a conceptual perspective that makes possible a genuine rewriting of history.<sup>1</sup>

The paucity literature on women, however, still remains grave, especially in the context of modern Indian history. One has to extend one's sources. In this context contemporary literature becomes extremely important. Literature is socially constructed and it too is political.<sup>2</sup> Writers have many-a-times an intuitive ability to capture and articulate in their works deeper human concerns and yearnings that academic, social or political analysis, with its methodological constraints and concentration on arguments based on ascertainable evidence, can ever convey.<sup>3</sup>

The pattern of women's lives, their expectations and ideals, their orientation to social reality and the 'ideals' of womanhood are considerably shaped by the models of womanly conduct set out in stories, legends and songs. It is precisely in this context—the making of the modern Indian attitudes towards women—that I have seen the stories of Premchand, [1880–1936], the most remarkable figure in modern Hindi literature in the colonial era, who had a tremendous impact in north India. His work has the same historic significance for India as that of Dickens for England, Balzac for France and Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky for Russia.

Art for art's sake may be a tempting ideal. But with colonial subjection constituting the cardinal constraint of Indian life, literature tended to become an essential vehicle for national awakening and regeneration.

---

\* Lecturer, Vivekananda College, Delhi University.

\*\* I would like to thank Prof. Sumit Sarkar, Ramesh Upadhyaya and Rajendra Sharma for their useful suggestions on this paper.

Imbued with varying degree of patriotic fervour, the creative writers considered writing an instrument to focus on the multifaceted problems of their society and to the realization of social and political goals.

This is not to say that these writers considered colonialism to be the chief and may be the only enemy in Indian society. Premchand realized that the language of nationalism was a language of transformation of society and a complete articulation of it required the dismantling of the colonial economy—within and without.<sup>4</sup> It is precisely for this reason that Premchand attacked the semi-feudal system equally strongly and depicted the contradiction between the landlords and the peasantry.<sup>5</sup>

A constant preoccupation, since the early nineteenth century, of social reformers and thinkers was the position of women in society. Literature of this century was also influenced by socio-religious reform movement and reflected similar concerns and limitations regarding women. The focus was on social 'evils' and solutions were sought within domestic space. Twentieth century saw the emergence of mass national movements, with women's participation in the public sphere. The changed mood found a voice in literature. However it is an open question whether it advocated any fundamental change in mentalities and attitudes regarding women. Premchand also makes women a focus of enquiry, a subject of the story, an agent of the narrative.

However, the issue of women's emancipation in India during the colonial period was linked with both liberal and conservative currents of opinion and was the outcome not only of a challenge and resistance to imperialism but also of a movement to reform and strengthen traditional hierarchical structure and ethos.<sup>6</sup> Premchand's stories reflect this complexity and paradox and also the interplay of conflicting emotions, values and ideas about women.

There is paucity of critical analysis of Premchand's portrayal of women. While one observes a remarkable sophistication [especially by Marxists] in the analysis of peasantry as portrayed by Premchand,<sup>7</sup> women who feature equally, if not more, in his stories have received comparatively less attention. In fact, as far as women's portrayal by Premchand is concerned, either one gets an uncritical praise and glory of it<sup>8</sup> or there is a downright denunciation, branding him as a conservative.<sup>9</sup> The capacity to embrace contradiction is lacking.

To raise Premchand to a pinnacle of glory or to demolish him completely does not present a totality of view. It is only through a materialist-feminist analysis and by adopting a dialectical approach that one can view ideological struggle and social change as possible.<sup>10</sup> It is only in the understanding of the tensions and contradictions within both ideology and society during that time and their reflection on Premchand that one can make an attempt to try and understand his portrayal of women.

I could broadly see four images of women, emerging in Premchand's stories: the ideal woman, the counter-model of woman, the suffering woman and one who protests. These images are not distinct or completely separate from each other. There are a lot of interconnections between them and they often run into each other.

#### THE IMAGE OF IDEAL WOMANHOOD

In a letter to Dr. Indernath Madan, Premchand wrote:

'meri nari ka adarsh hai ek hi sthan par tyag,  
sewa aur pavitrata. Tyag bina phal ki asha ke  
ho aur pavitrata sijaar ki patni ki bhanti aisi  
ho, jiske liye pachtane ki avashyakta na ho.'<sup>11</sup>

[My ideal of a woman is a combination of sacrifice, care and purity at one place. Sacrifice, without a hope for reward; care, without showing any dissatisfaction and purity like Caesar's wife, which does not bring any regret.]

And it is precisely this ideal of womanhood which is reflected in many of Premchand's stories.

In 'Swarga ki Devi'<sup>12</sup> (September 1925), Leela is the epitome of patience, sacrifice and forgiveness. She has an uneducated husband, a cheat for a father-in-law and a dominating mother-in-law. Above all, Leela's children die due to cholera. In this atmosphere, she accepts her fate without complaining and in fact preserves the institution of the family by her unquestioning love, which finally cures her drunkard husband and wins his heart. Her husband Sitaram in the end claims:

'bhai ghar bagh nahin ho sakta, par swarga  
ho sakta hai'. . . Leela vastav mein swarga ki devi hai.'<sup>13</sup>

[Home cannot be a garden but it can be a heaven. . . . Leela is a goddess of the heaven in actuality.]

In 'Bade Ghar ki beti'<sup>14</sup> (1910), one of the most popular stories of Premchand, Anandi, the daughter of a rich family, is married into an ordinary zamindar household. She quickly adjusts herself in the family. However, one day her brother-in-law flings slippers at her in anger. Anandi is very upset and her husband demands a division in the family. But Anandi, behaving like a 'true' daughter-in-law swallows her pride, forgives her brother-in-law and prevents the family from disintegrating. Everyone praises her:

'bade ghar ki betiyan aisi hi hoti hain.'<sup>15</sup>

[Daughters of rich households are like this.]

Though both these stories show Leela and Anandi in a conservative mould, I think what needs to be remembered along with this is the fact that sacrifice is leading on to some kind of a positive change. This has a certain significance and to this point, I will return later.



Both these stories also reveal that the institution of family is extremely important to Premchand. To a certain extent he is obsessed with familial life.<sup>16</sup> At this time the prime institution of the traditional female world was the household. This was the focal point of female reproduction, domestic labour and of kinship relations.<sup>17</sup> Premchand strengthens and nourishes this institution.

As most feminist studies have shown, family has usually been accepted as a natural unit rather than a social one. The household constitutes the ideological ground on which gender difference and women's oppression are constructed.<sup>18</sup> Premchand also produces the notion of 'the home as a heaven in a heartless world.'<sup>19</sup> Thus, inevitably the prize of preserving the family is paid by the women.

Also, the ideal of a chaste and loyal wife is depicted in many of the stories. In 'Sati'<sup>20</sup> (May 1932), low born beautiful Mulia is married to ugly Kallu. Because of her beauty, Kallu cannot trust Mulia, even though she is faithful to him. For her part, however, Mulia serves her mistrustful husband dutifully and nurses him when he falls ill. But he dies. His cousin Raja tries to win over mulia. But she remains unmoved. Second marriage is not for her. She decides to live like a sati.

In 'Suhag ka Shav'<sup>21</sup> Subhadra, an uneducated woman is married to professor Keshav. They both love each other dearly. Keshav gets a scholarship for going abroad. After some time he forgets Subhadra and plans to marry another girl, Urmilla, in England. Meanwhile, Subhadra decides to go to England. There she stays alone and discovers that her husband is about to marry Urmilla. Initially she is very angry but ultimately, upholding the sacrificial values, decides to go and leaves behind her wedding saree and 'sindoor' for Urmilla. Her end seems to be death only, because as Premchand says:

'aurat ko jeevan mein prem na mile to uska mar jana hi acha hai.'<sup>22</sup>

[If a woman does not get love in her life, it is better for her to die.]

In 'Devi'<sup>23</sup> (April 1935), the husband of untouchable Tulia never returns from a trip on which he had embarked in order to make money. Tulia remains his and is alone forever.

'Rani Sarangha', 'Shaap' and 'Maryada ki Vedi'<sup>24</sup>—all these stories have a feudal society as their backdrop and those very ideals are conveyed by them.

The feudal values of chastity, forgiveness etc. are portrayed with a certain conviction and firmness in Premchand's stories and at many places the crossing of these ideals is considered unacceptable.<sup>25</sup> The woman guards her chastity at all cost, as is clear from 'Sati' and 'Devi'. The ideal wife is docile and obedient, virtues integral to *stridharma*.<sup>26</sup>

Premchand also reverts women as mothers but for their nurturant rather than their reproductive capabilities. In fact, motherhood is highly prized by Premchand. It may also be a reflection of the fact

that he lost his mother when he was just seven years old. Thus in 'Ghar Jamai'<sup>27</sup> he states:

'bachon ke liye baap ek phaltu-si cheez—ek vilas ki vastu—hai, jaise ghere ke liye chane. . . .lekin maa to bache ka sarvasva hai. Balak ek minute ke liye bhi uska viyog nahin seh sakta.'

[For children, father is a luxurious item—just like beans for the horse . . . . but mother is everything for the child. The child cannot bear separation from his mother for a minute.]

In 'Maa'<sup>28</sup> Karuna is a widow who showers all her love and affection on her son. She believes in nationalism. But her son goes abroad for higher education and he does not oppose the colonial system. The heartbreak caused by this leads to Karuna's death. In 'Mandir'<sup>29</sup> also the mother dies on the death of her child.

Also, motherliness is treated as much more superior than sexuality in women and it is believed that women are 'natural' born mothers. They are passive sexual objects but dutiful wives and devoted mothers. Thus in 'Bhoot'<sup>30</sup> Premchand says:

'nari-charitra mein avastha ke sath matritva ka bhav drin hota jata hai. Yahan tak ki ek samaya aisa ata hai jab nari ki drishti mein yuvak matra putra-tulya ho jate hain. Uske man mein vishya-vasna ka lesh bhi nahin rehta. Kintu purush mein yeh avastha kabhi nahin aati. . . .purush vasnaon se kabhi mukta nahin ho pata.'

[The feeling of motherhood in a woman becomes stronger as she grows older. In fact a time comes when every man is like a son in the eyes of a woman. There is not even an ounce of sexual desire left in her heart. But this stage never comes in a man. . . . he can never free himself from sexual desires.]

There is an assumption that women do not have as many sexual impulses as men, that they are sexually sterile or passive and that sexual gratification is an abnormal phenomenon. The concept of motherhood has come under the deep scrutiny of feminist studies. Motherhood involves suffering and deprivation for most women under patriarchy. Indeed, it has been argued by some that maternity is the keystone of the most diverse social and political systems of male control.<sup>31</sup>

There is also the assumption held universally that women are somehow suited by 'nature' and evolution for mothering.<sup>32</sup> It thus reinforces sex-role stereotyping. 'We cannot separate the sexual division of labour from sexual inequality. The sexual division of labour and women's responsibility for child care are linked to and generate male dominance.'<sup>33</sup>

However there is another very crucial way in which this ideal of motherhood can be looked at. How this imagery of motherhood is

linked to motherland, bharat mata, dharti maa, ganga mai? How mother=earth=nation? How ritual symbols often combine and condense contradictory meanings, which then serve to symbolize 'real' human experience? I would be discussing this aspect in another part of my paper.

What broadly emerges is that the positive image of Premchand with its domestic and public orientations, produced an ideal of devoted mothers and dutiful wives.

But this is not the only aspect which needs to be examined. There is another very crucial way of looking at these stories. Although these stories may appear conservative, as they do not end on a 'positive' note from any radical viewpoint, it does not necessarily mean that traditional values are being unquestioningly upheld by the author.

So much depends also on the specific tone of these stories. There a definite tension emerges. For example in 'Suhag ka Shav', Subhadra at one place says:

'kya purush ho janè se hi sabhi baten kshamya aur stri ho jane se sabhi baten akshamya ho jati hain?'

[Does being a man make all things forgivable and being a woman all things unforgivable?]

Thus though the story may end on a sacrificial note, the statement reveals her anger and also reflects a tension in the story. Also in many of the stories ('Swarga ki Devi', 'Sati', 'Maa', 'Suhag ka Shav'), men are shown so often as villains—going abroad, being egoistic etc. The superior qualities of women are highlighted to contrast with the cruelty and oppression of man.

Also, as stated before, at many places, like in 'Swarga ki Devi' and 'Bade ghar ki Beti', sacrifice leads to a change for the better and this may signify to some extent a sort of deferential assertion.

Thus the narrative conclusion of the plot does not fully mean that the authorial intention is also the same because there is a tension in the tone and language of the narrative, signifying other nuances as well.

#### THE COUNTER MODEL: THE IMAGE OF THE WESTERN WOMAN

Intimately connected, and in fact flowing from his ideal image, is his counter-model of womanhood—the so-called apparently modern western woman, against whom Premchand betrays a particular prejudice. Premchand is extremely critical of the urban, educated, middle class, independent, career woman.

'Miss Padma'<sup>34</sup> (March 1936), is a story of an independent, highly educated lawyer. As an assertion of her identity, she thinks marriage to be a kind of slavery. She falls in love with Prasad and they decide to live together. However, Prasad is extravagant, starts ignoring her

and in the end leaves her with a baby. This is the end of western liberation.

However the anger in the story is directed towards both Padma and Prasad. Prasad is shown to be a shallow character. But Padma is also depicted not with sympathy but with contempt.

In 'Do Sakhiyan'<sup>35</sup> (February 1928), Padma and Vinod are a 'modern' couple. However it is a disastrous marriage since Vinod is a spendthrift and Padma flirts with another man. At this point Vinod thinks of ending his life but is saved by Kusum who advises Padma that men can be won only by sacrifice, spiritual love and complete dedication. Padma's friend Chanda has a traditional outlook. However at the time of her marriage, due to the evil of dowry, the marriage party goes away without the bride. But Chanda considers her husband her 'swami' and writes to him with the help of Padma. The husband accepts her. But the mother-in-law and sister-in-law constantly accuse her and Chanda on her part bears all this silently. The husband wants to live separately but Chanda refuses. He leaves alone. She stops eating and drinking and thus he is forced to come back. The oppression in the family ends and they live happily ever after.

Though 'modernity' is denounced and 'tradition' upheld in the story, a change in the husband for the better is implicit, and this is equally important.

'Premsutra'<sup>36</sup> (April 1926), depicts Prabha, a traditional Hindu woman, completely devoted to her westernized husband, Pashupati. However, the latter is attracted towards another woman. This other woman, Krishna, later rejects him. Then he goes abroad and marries an English girl who later elopes with an Englishman. At this point Pashupati is completely broken. He returns home. His daughter is about to get married and she encourages a reunion between her parents. Prabha, the loyal, sacrificial, devoted, wife cannot refuse.

In 'Unmad'<sup>37</sup> (January 1931), Manhar is a writer and his wife Vageshwari does all the housework, and bears all the tensions so that he can work in peace. Manhar is extremely successful and is chosen to go to England on a government scholarship. There he forgets his wife and marries Jenny. She uses her charm, flirts with men to get promotions for Manhar. Then they return to India and he is a celebrity by this time. Here Jenny refuses to abide to his wishes and be a 'dasi'. Manhar is frustrated, runs away and goes back to Vageshwari, who obviously accepts him back. Jenny chases him and finds him. Discovering about Vazgeshwari, Jenny tries to kill her. But Manhar snatches the pistol and kills himself.

'Shanti'<sup>38</sup> (August 1920) portrays Premchand's counter-model woman most effectively. Shyama, a traditional housewife, lives in a joint family. Her husband is a lawyer and admires western culture. He wishes his wife also to change accordingly. However as a westernized modern woman, Shyama alienates her husband and family. She even

loses her good qualities. The husband loses all peace and confesses that he would be cured only if they returned to their old existence. He says:

'mai phir tumhe vahi pehla ki-si salaj, neecha sir karke chalne wali, puja karne wali, ramayan padhne wali, ghar ka kaam-kaaj karne wali, charkha katne wali, eeshwar se darne wali, patishradha se paripurna stri dekhna चाहता हूँ!'<sup>39</sup>

[I want to again see you as a woman who is shy, walks with her head down, offers prayers, reads Ramayan, does household work, spins charkha, is scared of god and is completely devoted to her husband.]

Shanti also realizes that the western culture may have taught her many things, but in its hollowness and pretentiousness she had lost her strength of character. Thus she returns to her old ways, becomes an ideal, traditional woman and showers happiness all around. The story reveals an obsession and a fear about the fatal invasion of the sacred inner space by such acts as aping of foreign fashions, insistence on a greater leisure time for herself, reading English novels, as this results in a discordant individuality and this has to be done away with.

These stories convey the evil woman, the negative image of the educated middle class woman. Although, at this time the criticism of the educated middle class was fair to a certain extent, especially seeing their links with the British rule, and also the fact that Premchand mainly focusses his stories on the rural setup; as regards women this criticism took a distinctive shape and colour. It was counter posed to his ideal image, usually in the same story, as in 'Do Sakhiyan', 'Unmad', and 'Shanti'.

Thus for the women service is ideal, pleasure for oneself the counter-ideal; the image of the woman as a selfless giver the ideal and the one who demands or takes is a shallow character and the counter-ideal.

These stories reflect a bias against 'western' culture in Premchand. Also, he seems to instinctively recoil away from a modern sensibility reflected in contemporary colonial rule. There is an overall revulsion for the modern urban civilisational ethos. Thus the roots of this may be found in a strong anti-colonial feeling with a rejection of everything remotely connected to the alien west. A strong influence of nation-cultural perspective can be seen here. There seems to be a failure on the part of Premchand to reconcile what is perceived as 'national' with the 'modern'.<sup>40</sup>

Thus there was an attempt to preserve the inherited culture. The hatred sown by anti-colonialism is harvested in the rejection of everything that appears to be foreign.<sup>41</sup>

The ideal and the counter-ideal are part of the same image—the clear cut division between the heroine and the vamp, the good and the bad—the selfless giver on one side and the one who demands on the other.

## CONCERN FOR THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN: A REFORMIST ATTITUDE

In 1936, Premchand announced at the conference of All India Progressive Writer's Front:

'jo dalit hain, pirit hain, vanchit hain, chahe vah vyakti ho ya samuh, uski himayat aur vakalat karna sahitayakar ka farz hai.'

[It is the duty of a writer to protect and argue in favour of those who are oppressed, sufferers, deprived, whether an individual or a group.] And the oppression faced by women in the Indian society is what moved him most.

Thus to stop at the ideal-counter ideal imagery would be extremely unfair to Premchand. There is another image of woman which is much more powerful and hits one much more directly and sharply. Many of his stories bring out the unhappiness that falls the lives of Indian women crushed in a society dominated by obsolete customs. It is here that Premchand is at his best. As a sensitive artist, he grasps the problem of his times extremely effectively.

The tragedy and the wrong suffered by widows found manifestation most effectively in his stories, especially on a sympathetic and emotional plane.

In 'Beton Wali Vidhava'<sup>42</sup> (November 1932), Phoolmati becomes a widow. She was the 'malkin' of the house when her husband was alive but after his death, she is progressively ignored by her sons and their wives and is treated badly. They even usurp her property and jewellery and give nothing to their sister. When the question of the latter's marriage comes up, they are unwilling to help financially and thus she is married into an extremely ordinary household. Phoolmati is unable to bear this torture and ends her life by drowning in a river.

The story while on the one hand brings out the tragedy of widowhood and the wrongs suffered by her in her own household, on the other it also attacks the system of property relations. Thus a conversation pursues in the story:

'Uma ne nirih bhav se kaha—kanoon yahi hai ki baap ke marne ke baad jaydad beton ki ho jati hai. Maa ka hak kéval roti-kapre ka hai.

Phoolmati ne tarapkar poocha—kisne yeh kanoon banaya hai?

Uma shant sthir swar mein boli—hamare rishiyon ne, maharaj manu ne, aur kisne?. . . . Phoolmati. . . ke mukh se jalti hui chingariyon ki bhanti yeh shabd nikal pare—. . . Manu ka yahi kanoon hai aur tum usi kanoon par chalna चाहते हो?. . . maine per lagaya aur mein hi uski chaon mein khari nahin ho sakti; agar yahi kanoon hai, to isme aag lag jaye.<sup>43</sup>

[Uma (daughter-in-law) helplessly said—the law is this only that after the death of the father, the property is transferred to the son.

The mother has right only towards bread and clothes. Phoolmati asks—who has made this law?

Uma replies in a calm and steady voice—our saints have, maharaj Manu has, who else? . . . . Phoolmati . . . in an extremely angry tone: . . . Is this the law of Manu and you want to follow the same law? . . . I planted the tree and I only cannot stand in its shadow; if this is the law, then I wish it burned.]

It has been posited that 'there is a rough correlation between the position of women vis-a-vis men and the degree of socio-economic inequality in a society as a whole.<sup>44</sup> The story reveals the inequality between the sexes. It is also a reflection of Premchand's anger towards this inequality.

In 'Dhikkar'<sup>45</sup> (February 1925), widowed Mani is very extremely badly treated by her cruel aunt and uncle. She is kept away from auspicious occasions. She contemplates suicide. But Indranath, a friend of her cousin Gokul, worships and admires her. He dissuades her and instead proposes to her. They are married secretly but her aunt and uncle humiliate her and out of a sense of guilt, she ends her life. The story is a comment on the sad state of widowhood, where re-marriage is looked down upon by the society and societal pressures are a hindrance.

However, Premchand also seems to think that in a rural, semi-literate background, the taboos on widow remarriage are not so strong. As the complexities of a modernized, urban, developed region, are not present in rural areas it becomes easier to go in for remarriage.<sup>46</sup> Thus in 'Alguojha'<sup>47</sup> widow Mulia with two children marries Kedar. In fact

'vivah ki baat sunte hi vaidhavya ke shok se murjhaya huya uska peet vadan kamal ki bhanti arun ho utha. Das varshon mein jo kuch khoya tha, veh usi ek kshn mano byaj ke sath mil gaya.'<sup>48</sup>

[Hearing of marriage, the sadness of widowhood was transformed into a glow of happiness. All that she had lost in the past ten years was at that moment returned to her with interest.]

In 'Swamini'<sup>49</sup> the widow Rampyari takes care of the whole household but slowly everybody leaves her. She is completely broken but slowly she starts taking care of herself and is attracted towards her 'halwaha' Jokhu. The attraction is mutual and ultimately he proposes to her. She is unable to refuse. 'Alguojha' and 'Swamini' bring out into sharp focus the social right of a woman to love and to be loved. Similarly in 'Subhagi',<sup>50</sup> the child widow Subhagi is extremely loving and sincere. Her brother Ramu is worthless. It seems like a veritable revolution when we find Subhagi's mother saying to her:

'tumhari jaisi beti pakar tar gai. Mera Kriyakarma tumhi karna!'

[I am blessed that I have a daughter like you. I would like you to perform my last rites.]

The zamindar Sajjansingh is so impressed by her that without bothering about caste-jati ties or the fact that she is a widow, decides to make her his daughter-in-law.

Premchand himself married a widow Shivrani Devi and he also supported the Sharda Bill which aimed to raise the minimum age for marriage and to give the widow the right to her deceased husband's property.<sup>51</sup> There is thus a great sympathy for the widow. The case of their remarriage is admitted but also at times doubts are raised about its practicability in the immediate present. Thus in Premchand, there is a hesitancy at the level of action but not at the level of belief.

Also it is important to note that none of the widows in these stories are really assertive and strong willed, struggling to stand up as a person. The gender segregated environment continues under the control of the husband. The solution sought is always that of remarriage, and that also at a 'moral plane and more often in rural, low caste backgrounds.

In an extremely moving story, Premchand questions the unhappiness expressed all around at the birth of a girl. 'Nairashya'<sup>52</sup> (July 1924), shows the humiliation and contempt suffered by a woman having no sons. Nirupama is an object of scorn because she has been giving birth only to girls whereas the family expects her to give a male heir to her husband. Thus it is stated in the story:

'vo jante hain ki isme stri ka koi dosh nahin hai, ya hai to utna hi jitna mere (pati ka), phir bhi jab dekhiya stri se ruthe rehta hain, use abhagini keheta hain aur sadaiv uska dil dukhaya karte hain.'<sup>53</sup>

[He knows that there is no fault of the wife in this, or even if it is, it is as much as that of the husband; still he is always annoyed with her; calls her unlucky and always hurts her.]

When for the fifth time a daughter is born to her, she is unable to bear the thought of having to face further humiliation and disgrace, and she dies of heart failure.

As has been pointed out, gender difference that are/culturally produced and almost invariably interpreted as being rooted in biology, as part of 'the natural order of things.'<sup>54</sup> Thus the mother-in-law says daughter-in-law when she is pregnant for the fourth time and a son is expected:

'bahu, rehna do, main aati hoon. Tum koi bhari cheez mat uthaya karo. larkiyon ki baat aur hoti hai, un par kisi baat ka asar nahin hota, larke to garbha hi main maan karne lagte hain.'<sup>55</sup>

[You do not pick up anything heavy. With daughters it is different. There is no effect of anything on them. But the boys start behaving prestigiously inside the womb only.]



Literature, legend and popular mythology have usually and mostly retained only the more 'benevolent' aspects of life but Premchand touches the 'victims', abandoned to a life of prostitution. Prostitutes were invited at festivals, marriage and births to sing and dance.<sup>56</sup> Yet the social evaluation of them was negative in the extreme and they were openly held in great contempt.

In 'Vaishya',<sup>57</sup> Leela's husband Singarsingh is a regular visitor to the prostitute Madhuri. Leela requests her husband's friend Dayakrishna to get her husband back. He then starts visiting Madhuri regularly. Madhuri falls in love with him. When she discovers that Dayakrishna was pretending to love her, she says:

. . . koi stri swecha se roop ka vyavsaya nahin karti. . . agar (main) bhrashta hoon, to jo log yahan apna moohn kala karte hain, ve kuch kam bhrashta nahin hain.<sup>58</sup>

[No woman sells her body willingly. . . if I am corrupt, then those people who come here are no less.]

In fact, she is very hurt and decides to leave the place. She writes:

. . . purush-samaj jitna atyachar chahe kar le.<sup>59</sup>

[The male dominated society can do as much exploitation as it desires.]

Madhuri at the same time asks Singarsingh not to see her. She goes away. Dayakrishna realizes his mistake and tries to search her but she dies. In the story the prostitute emerges as an extremely powerful character with great inner strength. She, whom the society condemns, does the greatest sacrifice for someone whom she dearly loves.'

In 'Do Kabren'<sup>60</sup> (January, 1930), Sulochna is the daughter of a prostitute. She is a noble woman and is married to Ramendra. But the society will not let them live in peace. She is condemned by people and can only be looked upon with lecherous eyes. Ramendra gets extremely tense and when her prostitute friends visit her to have a look and bless her daughter, he is very angry and quarrels with Sulochna. She commits suicide.

In 'Actress'<sup>61</sup> and 'Aga Peecha'<sup>62</sup> also, the end is tragic. In the former Tara leaves the home on the day of her marriage because she does not want that Kumar Nirmalkant should be disillusioned after the marriage. In the latter Shradha, a prostitute's daughter and Bhagatram, a chamar by caste, love each other. They are about to get married but Bhagatram is unable to reconcile himself with the situation. Full of guilt, he dies. Shradha is completely broken, and says:

'pyare, main tumhari hoon, aur sada tumhari hi rahungi.'<sup>63</sup>

[Dear, I am yours, and will forever remain yours.]

All these stories have inevitably a tragic end. The prostitute and even her daughter are merely sex-objects and in the very process of socialization, they are accorded the lowest of the low status.

In colonial India, the changed economic situation and the time of the two World Wars gave great impetus to prostitution. Premchand exposes the worst victims of societal values. However he stops at that point. Though there is an attack on society and men, especially in 'Vaishya' and 'Do Kabren', a further radicalization of consciousness does not take place. However his most impressive achievement was his ability to describe the pain and suffering that accompanied the lot of the prostitute while simultaneously portraying his subjects as sensitive, loving and of high moral character.

The dowry evil also could not escape the eye of Premchand. In 'Virodhi'<sup>64</sup> (November, 1928), the parents turn their son away from the girl he loves, in order that they may get a fat dowry elsewhere. In 'Ek Aanch Ki Kasar'<sup>65</sup> (August, 1924), Yashodanand is a social reformer. He builds a public image by opposing evil social customs. He openly declares that he is taking no dowry at the marriage of his son but secretly he bargains for it. The hollow values of educated middle class are also revealed in this story. Another story that questions the middle class hollow concern for honour especially with regard to women is 'Nirvasan'<sup>66</sup> (June, 1924). In a mishap Maryada gets lost in a crowd at the Ganges. After a harrowing experience, she manages to reach home unscathed. But she is rejected by her husband and family due to 'questionable purity'.

What clearly emerges from these literary representations by Premchand is the fact that he grasps the social reality and the problem of his times regarding women extremely effectively. A critique of the reality is also present but the will to transform this social reality is caste in a reformist mould. Thus the solutions and reforms advocated by him are relatively mild, not advocated hastily or aggressively, and are not a shock to prevailing attitudes. He is brilliant in his understanding of the problem and its portrayal but a radicalization beyond that does not take place.

The impact of the nineteenth century reform movement is clearly visible in these stories. Premchand refuses as a writer to be more powerful than the society in which he and his tragic protagonists were located. Most of the stories end with a tragedy or a suicide of the woman. A tragic end though never means that Premchand is conservative or reactionary, it does prove that his search for solutions in the present context is limited and this is also the writers' limitation.

The stress in all these stories is more on 'emancipation from' than an 'attainment of'. The proposed reforms appear to be a collection of piecemeal measures rather than an attempt at concerted action. Thus she is just an object of social reform and possesses no inherent strength or

potential to break out from confining spaces provided by a traditional society. The sensitivity towards the problem however, remains.

#### VOICES OF PROTEST

However, there are also a few stories where women are not just objects of the narrative but become subjects of agitation in their own right. Our cultural heritage especially of the time of anti-colonial struggle, has tremendous potential within it to combat reactionary and anti-women ideas, if we can identify its points of strength and use it creatively.<sup>67</sup>

The ideology of nationalism proved a potent force for women to organize and protest. In the modern historiography however, gender is systematically ignored. At times a separate article on 'something-to-do-with-women' is included in a set of several articles.<sup>68</sup> But this tokenism is just not enough. These vast silences, distortions, marginalization and 'leaving out' from codified knowledge<sup>69</sup> of women has to be corrected. Efforts have to be made to restore them to history and many of Premchand's stories provide an insight into this.

'Jail'<sup>70</sup> is an echo of the repressive measures imposed by the British against the movement for the boycott of foreign goods. It is woven around two women, Mridula and Kshamadevi who are greatly attached to each other in prison. Kshama is a widow and she is arrested and sentenced. Mridula, on the other hand apologises and is released but not before she has faced the jeers of her jailmates for doing so. Her husband, mother-in-law and only son are one day killed in a firing. Mridula at this point becomes extremely militant and leads a procession. She is again arrested and comes back to the widow. But now she has no fear. She says:

'mujhme ab lesh-matra bhi durbalta nahin. . . main jail ke bahar rehkar jo kuch kar sakti hoon, jail ke andar rehkar usse kahin zyada kar sakti hoon.'<sup>71</sup>

[Now I have no weakness in me. . . I can do much more by being inside the jail than I can do by remaining outside it.]

In 'Patni Se pati',<sup>72</sup> Mr. Seth is a government servant and hates 'swadeshi' items. His wife Godavari however is inspired by nationalism. In spite of her husband's instruction, she goes to a public meeting arranged by the Congress. The husband is taken to task at his office and he resigns. The wife is delighted and asks him to join the mainstream struggle for freedom.

In 'Anubhav',<sup>73</sup> a woman's husband is a nationalist and is taken to jail. The woman is very proud of her husband but at the same time she is worried about living alone. Her family does not come forward to help her but a Mrs. Gyanchand takes her to her home. Her husband is slightly hesitant about it but is unable to do anything about it against his wife's will. He is threatened at his work but the wife refuses to leave the woman alone. Mrs. Gyanchand emerges as a very strong

woman for whom nationalism is extremely important but she never ventures out of the household.

In 'Suhag Ki Sari'<sup>74</sup> Guara is completely alien to the ideas of swaraj but her husband, a rich man is a supporter of swadeshi and boycott. Once he asks his wife to give up all foreign clothes. She opposes, especially when he wants to take her 'suhag ki sari'. However, realizing her husband's position, she gives it away. But she remains tense. Then one day her husband takes her to the 'swadeshi bazaar'. It has a tremendous impact on her and she decides to boycott all foreign goods and promote swadeshi.

The above three stories, while acknowledging women's role in the national movement, confine her participation to 'behind-the-scenes' or 'within-the-household'. The 'ghare-baire' division, the sexist structuring of domestic space versus public space, is upheld in these stories. The women of 'Patni Se Pati' and 'Anubhav' are stronger than their husbands but they provide their nurturance and support within the household.<sup>75</sup> Given the definition of a new patriotic community in familial terms, the woman's patriotic enterprise could well be located within the family.

'Sharab ki Dukan'<sup>76</sup> shows the boycott of liquor shops by nationalist volunteers, men and women. Mrs. Saxena wants to sit on the dharna at liquor shops but she is opposed by a young man. Mrs. Saxena is hurt and says:

'aap bhi anya purshon ki bhanti swartha ke putle hain. . . . Aurton ko koi mauka nahin dena chahete.'<sup>77</sup>

[You also like other men, are an epitome of selfishness. . . . You do not want to give any opportunity to women.]

The man himself goes there but he loses his temper and is beaten up in the course of picketing. The woman comes on the scene the following day and although she is also injured, her patience and determination bear fruit when the liquor licence holder gives up his licence and instead opens a shop to sell swadeshi cloth.

The story reveals the strong impact of Gandhi on Premchand. There is an emphasis and appreciation of her 'special trait', the ability to patiently and silently bear suffering. The result is obviously a dubious one, with an extension of the female space and at the same time an emphasis on her subservient role.

However in some stories a different stance is evident. In 'Juloos'<sup>78</sup> (January, 1930) Daroga Birbal Singh is a typical government servant and hopes to impress his bosses by dispersing the crowds cheering a nationalist procession during the civil disobedience movement. Ibrahim, an old freedom fighter, is trampled under his stick and later succumbs to the injury. There follows a funeral procession and the inspector is present again at the head of the police force. This time he finds his wife in the very front row. He is deeply ashamed of himself.

'Samar Yatra'<sup>79</sup> is about a procession of nationalist leaders visiting a village. The village is decorated. The seventy-five year old Nohri is extremely excited. When the leaders come and start speaking, the police arrives on the spot. Everybody runs here and there. Only Nohri remains. She is extremely angry and says to the daroga:

kya lal pagri bandhkar tumhari jeebh aith gai hai? . . . hamara hi paisa khatte ho aur hami ko ankh dikhatte ho.'

[Has tying the red burden made you so arrogant? . . . You survive on our money and threaten us only.]

Hearing her other people are encouraged to speak. She emerges as the most vocal and militant of the whole lot. Next day the 'satyagrihis' leave the village. Nohri walks along with them, encouraging everybody.

In 'Aahuti',<sup>80</sup> Shilavati protests not only against exploitation from outside but also from exploitation within and defines the true definition of freedom. She says:

'jin burayion ko ham door karne ke liye ham aaj prano ko hatheliyon par liye huye hain unhi burayion ko kya praja isliye sar charayegi ki ve videshi nahin, swadeshi hain? Kam se kam mere liye to swaraj ka yeh arth nahin hai ki john ki Jageh Govind baith jaye. Main samaj ki aisi vyavastha dekhna chahti hoon ki jahan kam se kam vishamta ko ashreya mil sake.'<sup>81</sup>

[Will the people raise to pedestal the evils of society, against which we are today staking our lives, merely because they'll be indigenous and not foreign? At least for me 'swaraj' does not mean that instead of John, Govind comes to power. I want to see such a society in which there is least discrimination.]

To some extent, Shilavati has her own autonomous consciousness and she is aware that she has to fight the evils within as well.<sup>82</sup> This story also reveals the fact that though Premchand's anti-colonial consciousness is tremendously influenced by Gandhi, he goes beyond the limits of the era and raises questions regarding the nature of the national movement. The limitations of the national movement itself regarding women, where it was thought that an autonomous women's rights movement could easily fit with a nationalist movement,<sup>83</sup> were to a large extent the limitations of Premchand.

At times however, there emerges a literary representation of a militant woman who leads demonstrations and goes to jail. Also participation in the freedom struggle was not a prerogative of the upper few. In these stories Premchand internalizes the ideological break that the movement had generated. Thus here he bridges the gap between political practice and cultural representation. These stories prove to some extent a 'corrective' for the wrongs done to women and they also emphasize the need to look at other cultural expressions at

the time for finding an answer or even understanding the complexities of the time.

However, it is not only in the sphere of nationalism, but even in the 'forbidden', 'personal', familial domain, protest is voiced. In such stories women carve out a separate sphere for themselves. They allow a living space, which though problematic, nevertheless provides a voice, a protest. Premchand was aware that the voices of protest had to fight against powerful social currents and rise above the prevalent environment.

'Kusum'<sup>84</sup> is an extremely important story. Kusum yearns to be accepted by her husband and begs him to give her a chance to serve her 'swami'. However, Premchand himself says in the story:

'striyon ko dharma aur tyag ka path parha-parhakar hamne unke atmasamman aur atmavishvas dono ka hi ant kar diya. Agar purush stri ka mohtaj nahin, to stri bhi purush ki mohtaj kyon jo?'<sup>85</sup>

[By continuously preaching women about religion and sacrifice, we have ended both their self-respect and self-confidence. If the man is not dependent on the woman, then why should the woman depend on the man?]

And slowly there is a tremendous development of Kusum's character. She says:

'vartman stithi mein patni banna gulami na sahi, purush se kamtar darja swikar karna hai. Prem to arthik samta ka naam hai. Is asamanta mein prem ka astitv ho sakta hai, mujhe to isme sandeh hai.'<sup>86</sup>

[In the present situation to become a wife may not be slavery, but does mean accepting a lower status to that of man. Love is the name for economic equality. I have doubts whether in the present inequality, love can prevail.]

She is repelled by her husband's greed, firmly prevents her father from paying anything to him and rejects her husband. She no longer had the inclination to cling to, at all cost, to the safety and security of a world in which she was deprived, misunderstood and humiliated. She asserts her own independent identity. She recognizes her inner strength, gains tremendous confidence and announces her decision:

'maine swatantra rehna ka nishche kar liya hai.'<sup>87</sup>

[I have decided to remain independent.]

Thus she decides to stand on her own feet. Though Premchand has not got the word divorce to his mouth, it is explicit that he supports it. He realized that divorce was antithetical to Hindu marriage but given the wretched state to which women had been reduced, he defied the Hindu order and considered it a necessary measure.<sup>88</sup>

In 'Brahm Ka Swang',<sup>89</sup> the husband claims to be extremely progressive. He is against the caste system. But in actual practice he appears to be totally conservative and it is his wife who is actually full of humane values. When she realizes the dicotomy in saying and practice in her husband, she is very angry:

'usi kshan se patishradha aur patibhakti ka bhav mere hridya se lupt ho gaya.'<sup>90</sup>

[At that moment itself the feeling of faith and devotion towards my husband vanished from my heart.]

The woman is not only much stronger than the husband, she is also much more open to ideas and is capable of questioning her husband's false stance.

'Naya Vivah'<sup>91</sup> deals with the problem of May-December marriages. Lala Dangamal hates his first wife because she is not very young:

'Leela 40 varsh ki hokar burhi samajh li gayi thi, kintu ve 45 ke hokar abhi javan hi the, javani ke unmad aur ullas se bhare.'

[Leela was considered old at the age of 40, while he even at the age of 45 was young, full of excitement and joy of young age.]

As soon as the wife dies, he remarries. His wife Asha is very young. She feels sad and lonely. Then a young man Jugal is employed in the household and they both are attracted towards each other. There is no sense of guilt and Premchand portrays their relationship beautifully. The story ends with Asha inviting him to meet her when she is alone. The story is an evidence of Premchand's opposition to this kind of marriage and also of the woman's right to defy her husband in such cases. It proves that the 'legitimate' and dominant pattern of female subordination is neither a truth for all times nor an unalterable 'natural' law.

The voice of defiance and protest becomes much more vocal and effective when Premchand talks of peasant or low caste/class women. Thus the story 'Abhilasha'<sup>92</sup> starts with a paanwala beating his wife. She gets angry and says:

'bas maroge to theek na hoga. Aaj se mera tujhse koi sambandh nahin.'

[Stop beating me or it will be not correct. I have no relationship with you from today.]

In the story 'Balak'<sup>93</sup> Gangu marries a widow about whom it is said that she is characterless. However Gangu loves her dearly and is very happy with her. After some time, he comes to know that she is pregnant with someone else's child. Gangu has no hesitation in accepting him as his own. He says:

'maine ek boya hua khet liya, to kya uski phasal ko isliye chor doonga ki use kisi doosre ne boya tha?'<sup>94</sup>

[I took a planted field, so will I leave its crop simply because somebody else has planted it?]

Though Premchand is greatly uncomfortable on the question of sexuality, the protest against sexual harassment is vociferously voiced. In 'Ghaswali',<sup>95</sup> Mulia is a poor chamar woman who is sexually harassed by the upper caste landowner Chain Singh. To him, it was natural to assume that a sweet face among the lower castes is meant solely to become the plaything of the upper caste men. He had won many such victories; but Mulia rejects his advances. She accuses him spiritedly:

'agar mera aadmi tumhari aurat se is tarah baten karta, to tumhe kaisa lagta? . . . mujhse daya mangte ho, isliya na ki main chamarin hoon, neech jati hoon aur neech jati ki aurat zara-si ghurki-dhamki ya zara-se lalach se tumhari muthi mein aa jayegi. Kitna sasta sauda hai! Thakur ho na, aisa sasta sauda kyon chorne lage?'

[If my man would have talked to your wife the same way, how would you have felt? . . . You ask me for kindness, because I am a chamarin, from a low caste, and a low caste woman is easy to win either by threats or by small temptation. What a cheap bargain it is! You are a thakur. Why would you relinquish such a cheap bargain?]

At this Chain Singh claims:

'main to tere charnon par sar rakhne ko tayar hoon.'

[I am ready to keep my head on your feet.]

In turn Mulia replies:

'isliye na ki jante ho, main kuch nahin kar sakti. Jakar kisi khatrani ke charnon par sir rakho, to malum ho ki charnon par sir rakhne ka kya phal milta hai! Phir yeh sir tumhari gardan par na rahega.'<sup>96</sup>

[Because you know that I cannot do anything about it. Go place your head on the feet of a khatrani, then you will realize what is the result of placing your head on someone's feet! Then your head will not remain attached to your head.]

Mulia thus rebels against the accepted norms. Her protest is so effective that Chain Singh was shamed into changing his ways.

Quite clearly in actual life also such forms of protest would have been taken up by the women from time to time. The women in these stories are self conscious, assertive and strong willed. Thus in 'Asbhoshan'<sup>97</sup> story the woman says:



'mujhme jeev hai, chetna hai, jar kyon kar ban jaon. . .pag-pag par shanka ko main ghor apman samajhti hoon. . .koi lathi liye mere peeeche ghumta rahe yeh ashay hai'

[I have life, I have consciousness, why should I be static. . .I consider it gravely insulting to be looked at suspiciously at every step. . .it is impossible for me to tolerate continuous threats.]

Thus on various planes, voices of women's liberation can be heard. The protest is voiced at times against colonial exploitation, at times against feudal oppression, at times against so called moral and social values, at times against familial structure, above all in favour of the oppressed.

Premchand may have been at times speaking ahead of the times but he was never wholly unrealistic. The stories here do reflect a changing of values and give credence to the prevailing climate. Even if such thinking did not exist, at least, the social milieu was ripe for such ideas to be expressed. These stories point to a 'her story', suppressed and forced underground at times, but constantly re-emerging.<sup>98</sup> Women in India have always been able to draw upon a stock of cultural imagery which represents women not as weak and passive but as endowed with power and energy.<sup>99</sup> Thus areas of potential liberation are created in a cultural form.<sup>100</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Before I conclude, I would like to state that the distinctions made between different stories are not clear cut ones, and they often run into each other and there are a lot of interconnections. I have made these distinctions merely for convenience sake and it is not my intention to be mechanical. Also through these classifications, I want to reveal the complete picture of Premchand and not just one side or aspect of his.

Those who brand Premchand as conservative or reactionary on the women's question<sup>101</sup> or the others who eulogize him as the epitome of progressiveness on gender equality<sup>102</sup> forget that such binary heuristic categories as progressive and reactionary, reformer and revivalist are of doubtful validity.

Premchand's stories have a mixed legacy. Seen from a contemporary viewpoint, it is easy to see in his ideal of womanhood the basis for women's continued subordination within the patriarchal family. Examined in their historical context, however, these stories of Premchand were brave pioneers, expanding the frontiers of women's role and consciousness at a time when these frontiers were severely limited.<sup>103</sup> So far as inter-personal relations and male attitudes towards women are concerned, we at present have no right to sit in moral judgement over our predecessors.

Also, Premchand cannot be seen in isolation. He has to be placed in the colonial-national context. Characterizing contemporary social consciousness as such, a confrontation of an old traditional society with

a colonial dispensation (that aimed, besides political subjugation, at cultural conquest as part of its imperialist design) was integral in Premchand's writings. Any viable reaction to this confrontation had to have a differential mix of both the new and the old.<sup>104</sup>

According to Amilcar Cabral, who has worked on colonialism and culture in a consistent manner, 'national liberation' is necessarily a cultural act'.<sup>105</sup> In response to the colonial cultural hegemonisation, there was an attempt to assert the identity of indigenous cultural tradition. The intellectual transformation of colonial society reflected the contradictions in attitude towards tradition and modernity, which was a part of the historical process.<sup>106</sup> The conflicting development of the times is preserved like a historical document in Premchand's stories.

However, another extremely interesting way of looking at Premchand's portrayal of women is to look at the gender images conveyed and moulded by the stereotype images of women in society. The imagery of ideal woman, of motherhood, of the nature-as-woman motif evoked the imagery of motherland—a private intimate world to be protected from outside penetration. Thus Premchand emphasizes the nurturant capabilities of women rather than their sexual ones.

An ideological ethos that believed in the fact that feminine sensitivity can undermine the repressive rationality and work ethic of imperialism and colonialism, was perceptively used by Gandhi. In his experimentation with the feminization of politics, he was carry enough to evolve a feminine ideology and ethics.<sup>107</sup> If this ideology found a political expression in the rise of Gandhi, it found a cultural one in the rise of Premchand. It is precisely for this reason that sacrifice, endurance, patience are stressed as 'the' qualities, and also there is an assertion of women's superiority to men regarding these qualities.

Also like Gandhi, Premchand in his writings sought to harness the energies not of the westernized middle class or the urban proletariat but that of the powerless, the silenced, the marginalized, the peasantry, the women. However, as I have stated before, at times Premchand goes a step further and makes a successful but limited attempt to adopt a more radical posture. He is not able to acquire a more revolutionary and militant overtone because ideology—as the work of constructing meaning—cannot be divorced from its material conditions in a given historical period.<sup>108</sup>

Premchand's stories were influenced and reflect the conflicting popular mentalities of his times. Also, there is no one-to-one relationship between the author's intentions and the way in which a text will be received.<sup>109</sup> So even when he tries to produce and perpetuate certain more progressive measures, he is not very well received by the reader. This may partially explain the reason why his more militant stories are not so popular and well known.

Actually, patriarchal ideas were entrenched in the tradition and theories of liberation movement themselves. The forces of women's oppression were much more powerful, articulate and organized at that time.

At the same time it must be remembered that women's possibilities for effective action vary according to time and class. While seeing the portrayal of women by Premchand, one will have to also analyse the nature of the women's movement then. Premchand tries to move into the psyche of an Indian woman at that time and manages to capture it to some extent. Thus there was a limitation of women's consciousness and also the lack of an autonomous movement. The attitude of Premchand towards women was to a large extent shared by the women's movement of the time. As has been stated by Elizabeth Fox Genovese, women's consciousness does not derive exclusively from their biology women's consciousness does not derive exclusively from their biology or even from their everyday lives in the narrow sense. It also derives from their communities' and the larger society's models of womanhood, from structural opportunities for women as women and for working people as members of a class from prevailing family and political relations, and more. On any given occasion, women may act out of their complex sense of their identities, rights, and responsibilities as women. But even then that sense will also derive from their sense of themselves as members of a class, a nation, and a larger culture.<sup>110</sup>

This is not to say that the stories of Premchand can completely be discarded. If one looks at the contemporary patronage/appropriation of culture by the urban elite and the state, one realizes how there has been a bureaucratization and institutionalization of culture and literature which allied with a market economy makes women's portrayal in culture a saleable commodity.<sup>111</sup> Thus the situation seems to have worsened today. Compared to that Premchand appears to be far ahead.

My intention in this paper has not been merely to underline the contradictions in Premchand. I have tried to place Premchand in a historical perspective. It is not easy or indeed correct to reach simple and certain conclusions. But it does appear that Premchand's approach is not merely reflectionist but also interventionist. Cultural practice is an essential site of the struggle over the 'meaning' of gender. Writings of people like Premchand, are a living memory. They leave the reader distributed but more important, they leave behind a legacy that stirs in the consciousness of the oppressed people.

## NOTES

1. Joan Wallach Scott, 'Survey Articles: Women in History', in *Past and Present*, no. 101, 1983, pp. 141-57.
2. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, 'Introduction: Toward a Materialist-Feminist Criticism', in Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (eds.), *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*, (New York and London, 1985), p. xv.
3. Sudhir Chandra, 'Conflicting Beliefs and Men's Consciousness about Women', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XXII, no. 44, October 31, 1987, p. WS-55.
4. This point has been made in many writings on popular nationalism. See for example Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. I, II, III, IV, V, VI, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1989 respectively).
5. Many of Premchand's novels depict this kind of confrontation, the best one being 'Godan', in Dr. Mahesh Bhartiya (ed.), *Premchand Sampooran*, part 1, (Indovision, Ghaziabad, 1989), pp. 3-304.
6. Sudhir Chandra, 'Literature and Changing Social Consciousness', in *The Indian Historical Review*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, 1979-80.
7. See for example Ramvilas Sharma, *Premchand aur unka Yug* (in Hindi), (Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1981); P.C. Joshi, 'Novel as a Social Protest: The Anti-Colonial Peasant in Munshi Premchand', in *Social Science Probings*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1985, (People's Publishing House), pp. 102-20; Amrit Rai, *Premchand ki Prasangika* (in Hindi), Hans Prakashan, Allahabad, (1985).
8. There has been a great amount of work in Hindi on women in Premchand's writings and most of it is full of praise of him without offering any critical analysis. Unconditionally, without any qualification, it accepts Premchand to be a revolutionary on all fronts including women's portrayal. See for example Dr. Geeta Lal, *Premchand ka Nari Chitran* (in Hindi), (Hindi Sahitya Sansar, Patna, 1965); Om Avasthi, *Premchand ke Nari Patra* (in Hindi), (National Publishing House, Delhi, 1962); Nanddulare Vajpaye, *Premchand Sahitya Vivechan* (in Hindi), (Hindi Bhavan, Jalandhar and Allahabad); Subha, 'Striyon Ki Samasyaon ke prati Premchand ka Drishtikon', in *Uttargatha* (in Hindi), no. 6-7, January 1981, pp. 186-202.
9. For detail see Geetanjali Pandey, 'How Equal? Women in Premchand's Writings', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XXI, no. 50, Dec. 13, 1986, pp. 2183-7. According to her in the ultimate analysis, it is clearly a conservative ideal that Premchand upholds for women.
10. Newton and Rosenfelt, *op.cit.*, pp. xv-xxxix.
11. Quote taken from Hansraj Raihbar, *Premchand: Jeevan Kala aur Krititva*, (Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1962), p. 231.
12. Premchand, *Mansarovar* (in Hindi), (Saraswati Press. Allahabad, 1984), vol. 3, pp. 72-81.
13. *Ibid*, p. 81.
14. *Ibid*, vol. 7, 142-51.
15. *Ibid*, p. 151.
16. This fact is also revealed in an article by Javrimal Parekh, 'Premchand Aur Nari Samasya', in *Uttarardh* (in Hindi), April 1980, p. 152. Also Premchand himself said:  
 "ghar' kitni hi pavitra, komal aur manohar smritiyon ko jagrit kar deta hai. Ghar prit ka krira-kunj hai. Prem ne kari tapasya karke yeh varadan paya hai.'  
 ['Home' evokes many a memories of purity, softness and beauty. Home is a playground of love. Love has achieved this gift after strict meditation.]  
 Quoted in Raihbar, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
17. Gail Pearson, 'The Female Intelligentsia in Segregated Society: Bombay, A Case Study', in Michael Allen and S.N. Mukherjee (eds.), *Women in India and Nepal*, (Monographs on South Asia, no. 8, Australian National University).
18. For details see Rayna Rapp, Ellen Ross and Renate Bridenthal, 'Examining Family History', in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, Spring 1979; Michele Bareett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*, (London, 1980), pp. 187-226.
19. Cristopher Lasch, *Women in a Heartless World*, (New York, 1977).

20. *Mansarovar*, vol. 4, pp. 145-53.
21. *Ibid*, vol. 5, pp. 207-31.
22. Quoted in Raihbar, *op.cit.*, p. 228.
23. Amrit Rai (ed.) *Gupta Dhan*, (Saraswati Press, Allahabad, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 61-2. For the ideal woman's faithful service to her man, also see 'Khudi' in the same volume, pp. 63-8; and 'Shuddhi' referred to in *Premchand Vishvakosh*, vol. 2, p. 394.
24. *Mansarovar*, vol. 6, pp. 45-114.
25. Parekh, *op.cit.*, p. 154.
26. P. Thomas, *Indian Woman Through the Ages*, (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964), pp. 183-84.
27. *Mansarovar*, vol. 1, p. 147.
28. *Ibid*, pp. 50-67.
29. *Ibid*, vol. 5, pp. 5-13.
30. *Ibid*, vol. 4, pp. 174-87.
31. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, (New York, 1976).
32. For a more detailed analysis see Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, (Harper and Row, New York, 1977).
33. Nancy B. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978).
34. *Mansarovar*, vol. 2, pp. 94-104.
35. *Ibid*, vol. 4, pp. 210-77.
36. *Gupta Dhan*, vol. 2, pp. 170-83.
37. *Mansarovar*, vol. 2, pp. 116-36.
38. *Ibid*, vol. 7, pp. 80-96.
39. *Ibid*, pp. 93-4.
40. For a detailed analysis of this point one can have a look at Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, (Oxford University Press, 1986). According to him, nationalist thought in India was primarily an elitist discourse and seems riven with an inherent and historically irresolvable contradiction i.e. failure to reconcile 'national' with the 'modern'.
41. M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, (Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1972), p. 51.
42. *Mansarovar*, vol. 1, pp. 68-88.
43. *Ibid*, p. 83.
44. Mona Etinne and Eleanor Leacock (eds.), *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1980), p. 8.
45. *Mansarovar*, vol. 1, pp. 213-30.
46. This point has also been brought out by Avasthi, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-42. Also feminist critiques of economic development argue that the situation of women often deteriorates as their society modernizes rather than being improved by the changes. For this point see Ester Boserup, *Woman Role in Economic Development*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970).
47. *Mansarovar*, vol. 1, pp. 13-34.
48. *Ibid*, p. 34.
49. *Ibid*, pp. 124-40.
50. *Ibid*, pp. 258-267.
51. See Amrit Rai (ed.) *Vividh Prasang* (in Hindi), (Saraswati Press, Allahabad, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 249-50.
52. *Mansarovar*, vol. 3, pp. 118-29.
53. *Ibid*, p. 118.
54. Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex', in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1975), pp. 157-210.
55. *Mansarovar*, vol. 3, p. 121.
56. Shiva S. Dua, *Society and Culture in Northern India: 1850-1900*, (Indian Bibliographies Bureau, Delhi, 1985), pp. 146-47.
57. *Mansarovar*, vol. 2, pp. 38-60.
58. *Ibid*, pp. 51-2.

59. Ibid, pp. 54-5.
60. Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 36-52.
61. Ibid, vol. 5, pp. 237-49.
62. Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 111-31.
63. Ibid, p. 131.
64. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 102-15.
65. Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 89-94.
66. Ibid, pp. 47-53.
67. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita (eds.), *In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from Manushi*, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1984). Kishwar makes a similar kind of point in it, p. 47.
68. There are many examples of this, like see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982); Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, (Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983); Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, (New Delhi, 1979).
69. Dale Spender, *Men's Studies Modified*, (Pergamon Press, G. Britain, 1981), pp. 1-2.
70. *Mansarovar*, vol. 7, pp. 5-16.
71. Ibid, p. 16.
72. Ibid, pp. 17-29.
73. Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 268-75.
74. Ibid, vol. 7, pp. 271-80.
75. This analysis has been expressed in many writings on women and Indian nationalism. See for instance Gail Minault (ed.), *The Extended Family: Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, (Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1981); Allen and Mukherjee (eds.), *op.cit.*; Kumari Jayawardene, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World in the 19th and early 20th Centuries*, (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands).
76. *Mansarovar*, vol. 7, pp. 30-48.
77. Ibid, p. 42.
78. Ibid, pp. 49-60.
79. Ibid, pp. 66-79.
80. *Gupta Dhan*, Vol. 2, pp. 183-94.
81. Ibid, p. 190.
82. One can even stretch the argument and say that she represents the 'subaltern' domain.
83. For this see Veena Mazumdar, 'The Social Reform Movement from Ranade to Nehru', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, (Vikas Publishers, New Delhi, 1976); Also Gerald in Forbes, 'The Indian Woman's Movement: A Struggle for Women's Rights or National Liberation?', in Minault (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 49-82.
84. *Mansarovar*, vol. 2, pp. 5-25.
85. Ibid, p. 13.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid, p. 24.
88. Rai (ed.), *Vividh Prasang, op.cit.*, vol. 3, p. 258.
89. *Mansarovar*, vol. 8, pp. 130-38.
90. Ibid, p. 138.
91. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 322-37.
92. Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 93-99.
93. Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 215-24.
94. Ibid, p. 223.
95. Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 305-17.
96. Ibid, p. 309.
97. *Gupta Dhan*, vol. 1, pp. 51-8.
98. Kathryn Hasen, 'The Virangana in North Indian History: Myth and Popular Culture', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XXIII, no. 18, April 30, 1988, WS-32.
99. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, *Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India*, (Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1986), p. 1.

100. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, 'Reflections on Women and Culture', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.), *Women and Culture*, (Research Centre for Women's Studies, Bombay, 1985), (Working Paper No. 1, for private circulation), pp. 1-23.
101. See reference No. 9.
102. See reference No. 8.
103. I owe this analysis to Gail Minault's article in *Manushi*, No. 48, 1988, p. 2.
104. Sudhir Chandra, 'Literature and Changing Social Consciousness', *op.cit.*
105. Amilcar Cabral, 'Unite et Lutte' I, p. 44, cited in Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War*, (Cambridge University, Cambridge), p. 183.
106. K.N. Panikkar, 'Culture and Ideology: Contradictions in Intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XII, No. 49, pp. 2115-2120.
107. The ideas of motherhood and also feminization have been to a great extent drawn from Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, (Delhi, 1982).
108. Barrett, *op.cit.*, p. 112.
109. Ibid.
110. Elizabeth Fox Genovese, 'Culture and Consciousness in the Intellectual History of European Women', in *Signs*, vol. 12, No. 3, Spring 1987, pp. 529-47.
111. Sangari and Vaid (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 26-7.

## *The Indian Historical Review*

Volume XV, Numbers 1-2

(Theme: *The World of Slavery*)

Chairman, Editorial Board IRFAN HABIB

Editor VIVEKANAND JHA

*The Indian Historical Review* (Journal of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi) publishes original papers and extensively reviews books on Indian history apart from containing notes and documents, reports, communications and tributes. Brought out since 1974, the *IHR* has been a principal means of transmitting results of researches in the discipline and has won wide recognition for its balanced coverage of different periods, treatment of new themes and high academic and editorial standards. This issue, mainly based on presentations at the Slavery International Congress, Sao Paulo, Brazil, held in June 1988, contains the following articles:

*Herbert S. Klein* Recent Trends in the Study of the Atlantic Slave Trade  
□ *Stuart B. Schwartz* Brazilian Slavery: Recent Trends in Brazilian Historiography □ *Russell R. Menard* Transitions to African Slavery in British America, 1630-1730: Barbados, Virginia and South Carolina □ *Francisco A. Scarano* Explaining Slavery: Peasants, Bureaucrats and the Failure of Labour Control in Puerto Rico, 1750-1820 □ *Robert J. Ferry* The Slave Trade, Slavery and Society in Colonial Caracas □ *Richard Price* Resistance to Slavery in the Americas: Maroons and Their Communities □ *Michael Craton* Seeking A Life of Their Own: Aspects of Slave Resistance in the Bahamas □ *David Geggus* The Causation of Slave Rebellions: An Overview □ *Claude Meillassoux* Slavery and Kingship in Africa □ *Joseph E. Inikori* Slavery and Capitalism in Africa □ *Joseph C. Miller* The Political Economy of the Angolan Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century □ *Martin A. Klein* Slavery and Emancipation in French West Africa □ *Robert E. Conrad* Economics and Ideals: The British Anti-Slavery Crusade Reconsidered □ *Marina Carter* Indian Slaves in Mauritius (1729-1834) □ *Irfan Habib* Some Notes on Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries—Evidence from Sufic Literature □ *Pushpa Prasad* Female Slavery in Thirteenth Century Gujarat: Documents in the *Lekhapaddhati* □ *T.R. Sareen* Slavery in India under British Rule (1772-1843) □ *Qeyasuddin Ahmad* A Mid-Nineteenth Century Case of a Long-term Lease, Not Sale, of Human Beings.

*Distributed by*

M/s MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007



*Re-Reading Race, Gender and English Texts in Post-Independent India: A Contest of Subjectivities*

It is a historical irony that even after the demise of the British Raj, the spectre of an all powerful patriarchal white subject still haunts our psyche. Moreover, the cross-breeding of the orientalist and neo-colonial constructs has given birth to more powerful re-incarnation of Indian male, exemplified in the TV *avatars* of Krishna and Rama. No wonder that the cultural apparatus for othering the marginals, minorities and women which had been already provided by the colonial and racist projects of British discourses had been efficiently utilised by the Indian power elites, in the construction of an integrated national male subject. The urgent task before us then, seems to be not only to exercise the imperial self but also to deconstruct the totalising and authoritarian gaze of the 'Indian male'.

The crucial questions of s/tex (t) ual politics raised by *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*,<sup>1</sup> thus acquires greater significance in post-independence India. A critique of academic and discursive practices, especially related to English Renaissance texts which had been functioning as courtyards of colonial nostalgia and hence the breeding farms of neo-colonial subjectivity in India, is initiated and theoretically elaborated in this work. The insight and the conceptual sophistry of the present work, side by side with the recent spurt in the study of gender and race, indicate that feminist scholarship in India has come of age and has become a radically provocative and theoretically enlivening presence in cultural studies.<sup>2</sup>

Generally, the writings and theoretical formulations of feminist scholars from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s seem to be ideologically anchored in the viewpoints of white, middle class women of North America and Western Europe. The universal claims of a phallogocentric world, clad in the meta-narratives of Humanity and Rationality were successfully unmasked by the feminists. Yet they were also prone to the lure of new quasi-meta-narratives which upheld a universal sister-

\* Research Scholar, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

hood, thus blurring the cultural and political differences and contradictions inherent in such a totalising grand theory. By the 1980s the grand theories and meta-narratives of the earlier feminist schools had been vehemently exposed and discarded. The cross-cultural assumptions of universal female dependence and confinement to the domestic sphere 'were revealed to be the false extrapolations from the experiences of the white-middle-class heterosexual women'.<sup>3</sup> As Linda J. Nicholson has rightly pointed out, these narratives 'hamper rather than promote sisterhood since they elude differences among women and among the forms of sexism to which different women are differentially subject'.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, such 'theories hinder alliances with other progressive movements since they tend to occlude axes of domination other than gender'.<sup>5</sup>

Bringing out the problematic interlocking of racial and gender relations, the present work challenges the monolithic and essentialist notions of a universal female projected by white middle class women. Informed by the resurgent sensitivity of feminist theorists to ethnic and gender differences, it strives for the 'triplication of what John Kelly had termed the double vision of feminist theory extending it from the moorings of class and gender to the intertwined issues of "race"'.<sup>6</sup>

The historical conflicts underlying the process of subjectifying women, blacks and the oppressed and the subvertive voices of the constituted subjects are amplified revealingly in the book. Not only does the study focus on textual strategies but it also reveals the strategical operations of appropriations attempted by various ideologues and academic institutions of patriarchal and colonial agencies. As the author has rightly pointed out, textual criticism should incorporate not only the inception of the text but also the subsequent deployment and reception of the text by the readers, if the critique of cultural texts has to be politically interventionist and effective. Thus, this study alerts us to 'multiple histories'—both within the text and of the text.<sup>7</sup>

The rigorous analysis of Shakespeare's plays undertaken by the author opens up the undercurrents of racial and gender tensions unidentified by preferred readings of the texts. Consequently, the central conflict of *Othello* is located by the author as between the racism of a white patriarchy and the threat posed to it by both a black man and a white woman. 'Thus, a tripartite and extremely complex relationship between black man, white woman, and the state' are explored. The torturing of women in Jacobean drama by a combination of judicial and religious authorities is also brought forth.

To disallow the prioritisation of Shakespearean texts, rather neglected Middletonian dramas and the Richards Brome's *Antipodes* are rightly upheld and appreciated by applying the Brechtian concept of epic theatre. It is observed that 'Brome is examining the formulations of subjectivity including its most elusive and private

aspects—through powerfully imposed ideologies and more self-conscious alternative fantasies that deliberately engage with and subvert them.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the nature and impact of the reception of the Renaissance text in India are examined in the context of the colonial enterprise of establishing the ideological hegemony of the Empire by exporting and employing English literature in the service of colonial schooling. Hence, its epic role of 'sabotaging the native selves'. The encounter between Western texts and Indian readers is located as the site of a complex drama where imperialism, colonialism, post-colonialism and patriarchy interact. Finally, an alternative reading and teaching practice have been formulated aiming at the ambitious project of seizing the texts from an anti-racist, materialist and feminist standpoint.

Yet one might be stunned by the methodological incongruities of the work which vacillates between the luxuriating sophistry of the post-structuralist exercise and impatient generalisms typical of journalistic discourses. The theoretical refinement shown in the criticism of Renaissance texts is gravely absent in the study of the reception of the text among Indian readers which occasionally slips into hasty conclusions and superficial treatment of female realities. The seriousness of the study is diluted when at times the textual concern of the author deviates into the mere enumeration of parallels from textual events and the experiences of Indian females projected by the media. A striking example is the statement that 'the similarity between violence in the plays and that which is directed against women in India is startling'. Though it is true that the preferred readings of Renaissance drama succeed in disseminating patriarchal values, it may be too far fetched to trace some direct correlations between dowry deaths and punishments of disobeying women in Western texts. The neo-colonial aggression towards the identity of women and the oppressed aggravated through the day-to-day telecasting and publishing of violent male messages should be distinguished from the academic and aesthetic dissemination of phallogocentric values by the Renaissance texts.

Another instance of the author succumbing to the narrative strategies of homogenising and equalising feminine differences may be found in her comparison of the 'Mathura' rape case and the 'Shahbano case' with the Jacobean construction of Vittoria which resonates the grand Eurocentric views of a universal male and female. The cross-cultural assumptions of the uniformity of the female is easily taken for granted thus obliterating the temporal, cultural and discursive specificities. The rather awkwardly diagnostic statement goes like this:

Vittoria is insistently present in the play. . . . Shahbano on the other hand, disappears from the controversy she sparks—she becomes the object of protection in various legal, political and feminist discourses but her own subjectivity is effaced as she is, refuses to be, represented by others; her contradictions are an indication of her placement in society and also of her resistance.<sup>9</sup>

Unconsciously subscribing to the black and white stereotypes of gender questions the author falls victim to journalistic clichés. On such occasions the study of the reception of the text distractedly slips into a rather sensational and superficial treatment of the 'resisting female' in fashionable legal and journalistic discourses, widely circulated among the media-fed middle class intelligentsia of India. The historical and discursive differences of the typification of the female in the two specifically divergent contexts are ignored, thus weakening the political effectivity of the study.

Although the author conceptually acknowledges the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the Indian people and also pledges to be sympathetic and responsive to the repressed voices of the marginals, her prognosis suffers from the ideological constraints of urban middle class intellectuals. Also, an excessive preoccupation with the exotic call of post-structuralist exercises, reaching the point of textualism in many instances, diverts and defeats the political vigil claimed by the author. The serious handicap of the rather sophisticated and radical studies of recent feminist writers like Gayatri C. Spivak and others seems to be that though they emphasise the minority experiences of the 'coloured' in the European or American metropolis, they shy away from the realities of ethnic, cultural and political aggression towards marginals and 'regionals' in India. The Derridean dance of signifiers and excessive indulgence in textual neologisms might ultimately end up merely as a colourful fire-play in the neo-colonial 'mise-en-scène' of post-Independence India.

Let me cite some examples from the text. While expanding upon the English teaching practices prevalent in the University of Delhi, the author takes note of the responses of students and certain difficulties faced by teachers. Then, she casually quotes a statement of Ruth Vanita, that it is 'difficult to teach Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* in Delhi because students there are ignorant and dismissive of South Indian culture'. It is strange that a feminist critic who claims to be sensitive to the cultural and ethnic differences of people misses the political connotations of such an ethnocentric attitude. However, the statement reveals how vehemently students are schooled in the exclusivist ideology of North Indian metropolitan elites, marginalising the minorities, low castes, females and cultures peripheral to them. No wonder that the elite audiences of our national capital easily identify

with Prospero, the white master and not with Caliban, the black servant, unlike the Latin American or African audience.

Similarly, on another occasion, even while acknowledging the complexity of the language problem, its political thrust somehow escapes the author. She writes: 'the language question is extremely complicated in a multi-lingual, multi-national, multi-ethnic state and intersects with the issues of *regional chauvinism* (emphasis mine); for example in many regions English is preferred to Hindi because of resentment against the political and cultural domination of the Hindi-speaking belt'<sup>10</sup> Here also the metropolitan bias is betrayed in the seemingly balanced statement by official-nationalistic jargons like regional chauvinism, thus devaluing the issue as a mere negative reaction against Hindi excesses.

Eventually, the author comments upon the strategies used by Indira Gandhi to perpetuate her authority through appropriating the masculine identity and encouraging representation of herself as Kali, the goddess of destruction. She states that Indira Gandhi was playing upon the ambivalence allowed by such an image. One of her conclusions is as follows: 'My point simply is firstly that the ambivalence of such histories must be amplified'.<sup>11</sup> What is dangerously missing in this analysis is the fact how intensely Indira is schooled in and moulded by the colonising traits of the male subject and how strategically the ruling Indian male had manipulated the Durga image of Indira as might be shown in the atrocious incidents of the 1984 riots perpetrated by her 'patriotic male devotees'. It clearly indicates the devastating effect of the mystification of female figures on the female community. Such incidents reveal that it was the female who was silenced and victimised in these semiotic games and it was she who was played upon by male power. How dangerously male subjectivity is interiorised by many females in India might be proved by the provocative and communalistic addresses of certain women leaders, arousing violent male passions and challenging them to assert their manhood by annihilating the people of contestant communities. Consequently, feminist writers have to be extremely vigilant towards the powerful strategies of division and co-option of female power through the multiple representations of the authoritarian male world.

Such critical considerations of the present text incidentally lead us to much more basic issues faced not only by the feminist critique but also by leftist praxis in India: How are we to counter the overarching violent embrace of an integrationistic and androcentric Indian subject, attached to the remote control stations of the metropolitan white male? How are we to deconstruct the present-day patriarchal Ramas, Krishnas, Sultans, Prosperos, supermen, spidermen, he-men, batmen, rambos etc, etc, increasingly crossbred or manufactured in the multiple power stations of our times? How can we locate and reconstruct counter-subjectivities? Where are we to identify our locale, people, our own

battleground, common enemy and our allies? Or else, what does constitute our 'we' and 'they'?

It may be tempting to answer these questions in purely theoretical or essentialistic terms. Rather they have to be encountered through political praxis and cultural struggles operating at local, ad hoc and specific levels, at the same time coordinated along multiple locales and axes of struggles.

In the pragmatic purview of such a logistics, universalistic and totalising concepts like 'third world women', 'Indian women', and the 'black' are obsolete and misleading. The decentred but radically consequential movements of ecological, micro-national, gendrical, caste and cultural struggles of recent times make us alive to the merging grounds of our emerging battlefronts. It may be within the constellation of these newly emerging counter-subjectivities of micro-national, local and marginal communities that we have to locate the struggling female and the 'other' in the Indian context.

Then the location of the 'other' and 'black' in post-independence India becomes a vernacular spectrum of multiple blacks and others but allying and joining in their political agony of marginality and repressed subjectivity—a black-magical theatre of contesting subjectivities of females, lower castes, tribals and village folk. It is in this seminal ground of suffering and struggling that we locate our Cleopatras, Desdemonas and Calibans with whom we have to identify and ally in our struggle against the integrating national male subject, policing or paternally sermonising our 'spoiled or sinful female selves', incarnating in the endless disguises of lover, glamorous romantic hero, guru, affectionate brother, aggressive anti-hero, angry young man, etc. etc.

In the absence of such a specific, contextualised and strategic stance, the textual operation of the concepts of gender and race might become more and more an academic exercise and might fall into the same death-traps of marginalising and ex-communicating projects against which they are fighting.

Perhaps it is in the provocation and stimulation of such politically crucial re-considerations that the earnest mission of the present work achieves its proposed goals.

#### NOTES

1. Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race and Renaissance Drama*, Manchester and New York, 1989.
2. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference', *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1 & 2, 1986; also her 'The Rani of Sirmur: an essay in reading the archives', *History and Theory*, 24, No. 3, 1985, *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*, New York and London, Methuen, 1987. For a historical understanding of the interrelation between English study and colonialism, see Tejaswini Niranjana's article in *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, Nos. 17-18, New Delhi,

- June 1989. Also her, 'Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English', *EPW*, April 14, 1990.
3. Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson, 'Social criticism without philosophy' in Linda J. Nicholson (ed), *Feminism and post-modernism*, Routledge, New York and London, 1990.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
  6. Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, op. cit.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
  8. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
  9. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
  10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

## *Recent Additions*

### **FOOD INSECURITY AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### *Vol. I: Food Systems and the Human Environment*

by Boudhayan Chattopadhyay

This work is the outcome of thorough research in the Centre for Regional, Ecological and Science Studies in Development Alternatives.

The first volume of the book (to be completed in two volumes) explores the profiles of food insecurity in Eastern India from the vantage point of the food system through the post-Independence decades. Attention is particularly focussed on micro community profiles of food insecurity, including health hazards, embedded in the tribe-caste-land-labour nexus. Attempt is made to combine a degree of sophistication of quantitative analysis with historical insights in which traditions and life-style are also explicitly admitted.

The second volume is in press.

(Volume I): 1991      pp. 400      ISBN 81-7074-087-8      Rs. 350

### **THE THEORY OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT**

#### *Principles of Marxian Political Economy*

by Paul N. Sweezy

(Original Publisher: *Monthly Review Press, New York*)

As a work in political economy, this book begins with the simplest elements of Marx's thought, his method, use of abstraction, and analysis of the commodity and of the relations between labour and capital, and concludes with the most complex categories of modern society: the historical tendencies of the capitalist system, corporations, international economy, fascism, and imperialism.

First Indian Edition 1991    pp. 398    Rs. 250 (hardbound)    Rs. 100 (paperback)

*\* Post free in case of advance payment*

**KP BAGCHI & COMPANY**

286, BB Ganguli Street, Calcutta: 700 012  
I-1698 Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi: 110 019



---

## **NEW FROM SAGE**

---

### **DEALING WITH POVERTY**

#### **Self-Employment for Poor, Rural Women**

**USHA JUMANI**

This book is based on a participatory research study of fifteen major economic activities undertaken by poor, rural women in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat. It highlights the interaction between the work and social roles of women in order to understand the reality of being poor, self-employed and female in a country like India.

**248 pp • Rs 195(hb) • Rs 95(pb) • 1991**

### **COPING WITH SEASONALITY AND DROUGHT**

**MARTHA ALTER CHEN**

This study describes and analyses the strategies adopted by different types of households to cope with seasonality and drought in a village in a semi-arid region of Gujarat. Chen has produced an important work which advances our understanding of the dynamics of poverty in rural India.

**254 pp (incl.31 tables + 8 Photographs + 4 Maps) • Rs 225 (hb) • 1991**

### **SOCIAL ACTION AND THE LABOURING POOR**

#### **An Experience**

**PRIMILA LEWIS**

This book is a candid account of Primila Lewis' experience in organising the labouring poor in Mehrauli, a rural suburb of Delhi. Lewis draws together this experience with a discussion of the nature of 'voluntary' social action vis-a-vis mainstream political processes and the left movement in particular.

**267 pages • Rs 95 (pb) • 1991**

**A Vistaar Book**



**SAGE PUBLICATIONS**

**M-32 Market, Greater Kailash I  
New Delhi - 110 048**

**WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM**

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

**DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA**

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

The Collapse of Actually Prevailing Socialism:  
Some Lessons **Azizur Rahman Khan** 3

The World, the Free Market and the Left  
**Robert Pollin and Alexander Cockburn** 18

NOTE Employment in India's Organised Sector  
**Suzan Hazra** 39

**BOOK REVIEWS** 55

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 19

NUMBER 7

JULY 1991

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland	
Single issue	Rs. 10
Double issue	Rs. 15
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 100
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 150
Annual (students)	Rs. 75
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 175
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 250
(Rs. 5 extra if by cheque)	

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	50
Sea mail	40

ISSN 0970 - 0293

## NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted to *Social Scientist* should not be under consideration by any other publication. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate, typewritten on one side only, and double-spaced throughout. Footnotes, including comments and references, should be indicated consecutively through the article by raised numerals corresponding to the list of notes placed at the end. They should provide the author's forename and/or initials, title of publication, publisher, place of publication and date of publication. The styles to be adopted for books and journal articles is indicated below:

1. A. Eckstein, *China's Economic Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
2. See R. Portes, 'Internal and External Balance in a Centrally Planned Economy', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, December 1979, pp. 325-45.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Please note the following change in address of *Social Scientist*:  
C-20 Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial

While recent developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have undoubtedly dealt a severe blow to the world socialist movement, these developments, it should be remembered, represent the culmination of a process of reforms initiated in all cases by the ruling Communist parties themselves. This phenomenon, if we rightly reject the assumption that the socialist world should forever have remained frozen in the mould it had taken on earlier for a variety of historical reasons, raises a number of questions: were the reforms misconceived, and if so what should have been their shape? Is it possible to combine social ownership of the means of production at least in key areas with a decisive role of the free market or should the market be subordinated to some overall plan? Are free markets a necessary condition for the sustenance of democratic structures, or are such structures compatible with a system of overall planning? In either case, what should be the value of a socialist polity? Then, going beyond 'ought' questions, can socialist structures, in particular social ownership, continue to draw sustenance from the commitment of the working masses to such structures or would they inevitably get dissolved in self-seeking apathy which bourgeois writers claim to be in conformity with 'human nature'? Can such continued commitment, if it is possible, provide the basis for an alternative work-motivation? And above all, if in the future socialist forces once again gain ascendancy in particular parts of the world, as they inevitably will since the current triumph of the so-called 'free market capitalism' is bound to be short-lived, what should they do to avoid traversing the same road which the earlier socialist regimes had done?

Answering these questions is tantamount to rethinking the basic positions which socialists, notwithstanding all their mutual differences, have subscribed to until now. Rethinking does not of course mean rejection, but a protracted process of such rethinking is a must for socialists today. In this context *Social Scientist* plans to bring out a number of articles by socialist intellectuals giving their own individual views on the kinds of questions raised above. These articles represent diverse positions and do not necessarily correspond to the views of the editorial board of the journal; they would, we hope, stimulate wide-ranging debate and discussion among socialists.

The two main articles of the current number are being published with this objective. The lead article by Azizur Rahman Khan, after summarising the results in terms of growth and income distribution of the economic performance of the socialist systems in the Soviet Union and China, a summary based on careful statistical analysis (done elsewhere), argues the case for combining multiple forms of ownership (excluding capitalist ownership) in a socialist society and the pervasive use of markets and material incentives. The socialist regimes in the earlier phase, notwithstanding their dramatic success during the phase of extensive expanded reproduction, erred, he argues, in ignoring the importance of markets and material incentives, under the influence of a kind of utopianism which was particularly out of place in backward economics; in the more recent reform phase, when they have introduced markets and material incentives, they have erred in introducing capitalist ownership as well.

The other article, by Robert Pollin and Alexander Cockburn, which was originally published in *The Nation*, argues by contrast for an attenuated role for free markets in a socialist society. Puncturing the current euphoria over free market capitalism, a euphoria particularly afflicting the literati in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and providing a comprehensive critique of free market policies, they argue that state intervention is not *per se* synonymous with bureaucratic degeneration. In the Indian context today when IMF-dictated 'stabilisation' and 'structural adjustment' policies are being embraced by the government as a panacea for our economic ailments, this article has a special relevance.

Finally we publish a note by Suzan Hazra which argues that the occupational diversification of the work-force out of the agricultural sector, which occurred for the first time in this century during the 1970s, may not be a sustainable phenomenon over time, since the present constraints on resource mobilisation are unlikely to permit the pace of GDP growth required for sustaining it.

AZIZUR RAHMAN KHAN\*

## *The Collapse of Actually Prevailing Socialism: Some Lessons*

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1989 marked an important transition in the history of socialism. The world system that claimed inspiration from Marxian socialism and had been in existence since 1917 was either wiped out or changed beyond recognition. The process of change is still going on. While it is not entirely clear what will emerge at the end, it is certain that the outcome would bear little resemblance to the system as it was before the onset of the present wave of transition.

Indeed the change has been far less sudden than appears from the breathtaking events of 1989. China led the way by launching itself on a path of reform that followed the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in December 1978. Within five years it decollectivized agriculture, promoted substantial private ownership in non-agricultural sectors and legalized private wage-labor. By early 1980s it had become clear that what had happened in China was qualitatively different from the preceding waves of reform that characterized the socialist countries from time to time. Since the late 1980s the Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe became the main stage of the drama. Unlike China, these countries simultaneously experienced political changes that were more profound than economic changes which often lagged behind. In the Soviet Union the change in the system of ownership has so far been slow, but all indicators point to the possibility of rapid change in future. In much of Eastern Europe socialism has been officially abandoned by emerging non-socialist regimes which have been busy reverting to the capitalist systems of ownership and market. Cuba, North Korea and Albania continue to adhere to past policies and institutions without inspiring much confidence or enthusiasm as a viable model of economic prosperity combined with a humane social organization. The conclusion is inescapable.

---

\* University of California, Riverside.

pable: the economic system that was consolidated in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and adopted elsewhere in the socialist countries, often with important differences, has or is about to come to an end.

In this paper I shall try to address two questions: (a) what have been the reasons behind the collapse of the actually prevailing socialism? and (b) since this has been the only form of Marxian socialism in actual existence, what does its failure indicate for the feasibility of socialism?

#### THE CHARACTERISTICS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF ACTUALLY PREVAILING SOCIALISM

##### *The Main Characteristics of the System*

The economic system of actually prevailing socialism was consolidated in the Soviet Union in the decade or so after the launching of the First Five Year Plan in 1928. Its main features were the replacement of private ownership of means of production by public and collective ownership and the replacement of market by central planning. Public ownership of means of production was promoted throughout the economy to the extent of severely limiting individual ownership (i.e., private enterprise based on own and family labor without resort to hired labor). The part of agriculture that was not under public ownership was collectivized and put under strict state control. Legal individual enterprise was by and large limited to the private plots of the collective farm workers. The market was rejected as the mechanism to determine the allocation of resources. It was replaced by a system of planning by command implemented through a hierarchical administrative structure with the central planning organization at the top and enterprises at the bottom interacting through the intermediate layers represented by government ministries and departments.

The system varied from one country to another. Collectivization was implemented with less use of force in China than in the USSR. Poland never succeeded in imposing collectivization on its peasantry and Yugoslavia too avoided collectivization. The degree of private activity was greater in some countries than in the others. But most of the features of the basic model applied to all the countries adhering to the system.

##### *Growth and Distribution*

A comprehensive account of the performance of the system is far too big a task to be addressed in a paper like this. Instead we shall briefly summarize the performance of the two giants of the system, the Soviet Union and China, in terms of two economic indicators, growth and income distribution. Admittedly the performance in these two areas cannot be taken as an overall indicator of the performance of a system. But one might argue that superior performance in these areas would be the minimum evidence of credibility of the socialist system whose



claimed superiority over capitalism was based on the argument that the latter was wasteful (due to the anarchy of capitalist market) and exploitative (due to the capitalist appropriation of surplus value). Thus the expectation was that the end of capitalism would make production more efficient and distribution more equitable.

The problem of measurement is enormous and it is uncertain at the moment how many of the basic facts about the past on which the estimates of performance are based will become a casualty of the ongoing wave of rewriting past history. The following broad conclusions about growth and distribution in these two countries are subject to these qualifications.

Soviet growth performance has evolved through three distinct periods. The first period includes the years between 1928 and 1940, the launching of the First Five Year Plan and the eve of German aggression. During this period the Soviet economy achieved an annual average growth in GNP of close to 6 per cent and in per capita GNP of over 3.5 per cent.<sup>1</sup> At the time these rates were not only higher than that in any other country in the depressed capitalist world but also unprecedented. Growth in labor productivity and per capita consumption were, however, rather unspectacular, respectively below 2 per cent per year and below 1.5 per cent per year. The second period consists of the 1950s and 1960s, the two decades after the initial post-war reconstruction. The annual growth rate in GNP continued to be high, about 5.5 per cent and close to 4 per cent per capita. During this period labor productivity also increased rapidly, at 4 per cent per year during the 1950s and 3 per cent per year during the 1960s. Most significantly, per capita consumption increased slightly faster than per capita income. The third period, starting around 1970, has witnessed steady decline in the annual growth rate in GNP, to 3.7 per cent in the early 1970s and 2 per cent in the early 1980s. Growth in labor productivity also declined steadily to 1.3 per cent per year in the early 1980s. Per capita income and consumption growth in the early 1980s were only about 1 per cent per year.<sup>2</sup>

China experienced a very high rate of growth in national income—more than 9 per cent per year—during much of the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, this period of high growth included the period of complete transition to collectivization of agriculture and the socialization of means of ownership throughout the economy. As a consequence of the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) China experienced a disastrous decline in income during 1959-61. From about 1962 the economy experienced a sharp upward surge in the rate of growth which slowed significantly since the late 1960s, after the launching of the Cultural Revolution. Even so, the trend rate of growth in national income during the decade of the Cultural Revolution was close to 7 per cent per year, though the growth of national income originating in agriculture declined to less than 3 per cent per year. Productivity growth in agriculture was very low indeed.

The estimation of income distribution is more difficult. Gini coefficients for the Soviet Union estimated for the mid 1970s are significantly lower than that in an average West European and North American country, but also significantly higher than that in the Scandinavian countries. These Soviet estimates however do not make any allowance for the non-monetary income of the elite group. An allowance for the latter raises the estimate of the Soviet Gini coefficient to such a level that it is exceeded by only a handful of that in advanced capitalist countries.<sup>4</sup>

For China available estimates suggest that ever since the land reforms in the early 1950s the distribution of income in China has been highly egalitarian by the standard of a typical developing country. It is however unlikely that the distribution of income in China was significantly more egalitarian than in countries like Taiwan and South Korea.<sup>5</sup>

To summarize: the Soviet growth in GNP during the first decade of planned development was unprecedented by any historical standard. It provided a dramatic contrast to the stagnation that the capitalist countries were experiencing at the time. The high rate of growth in GNP was however due to high accumulation and labour absorption. Growth in labor productivity was modest and very little of the increased production was allowed to boost the consumption of the masses. After World War II, both the Soviet Union and China achieved high rates of growth in GNP for a period. But these growth rates were exceeded by the fastest growing capitalist countries, both advanced and developing. In both the countries, the rates of growth declined later. The decline was disastrous in the Soviet Union. In China the decline in growth was modest in the non-agricultural sectors but serious in agriculture. Both the countries achieved reasonably good distribution of income by the standards of the capitalist countries.<sup>6</sup> It does not however appear that the distributions of income in these countries were significantly better than in the *more egalitarian* of the capitalist countries. One particularly favourable aspect of the distribution of income of these countries is that, in comparison with the capitalist countries of similar living standard, they appear to have been able to limit the incidence of dismal poverty and deprivation much more successfully. One particularly unfavourable aspect of income distribution in these countries is that they appear to have been unable to avoid sharp short-term deterioration in income distribution leading to famines of unprecedented magnitude during the periods of their transition.

It is hard to argue that the Socialist world as a whole performed any better than the two giants. The growth performance of the Eastern European countries was probably no better than that of the Soviet Union on the average, although some of them may have attained a better distribution of income. With the possible exception of North

Korea, the Third World Socialist countries all performed worse than China.

Unsatisfactory economic performance, more specifically inadequate and inefficient growth, have been cited as the most important factors behind the reform programs that finally culminated in the events of 1989. An understanding of the reasons behind the unsatisfactory economic performance is therefore the key to an understanding of the collapse of actually prevailing socialism.

#### AN ATTEMPT AT EXPLAINING THE POOR ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

A great deal has been written about the inefficiency of the economic system of the actually prevailing socialist countries. The broad consensus appears to be that the system failed to use resources efficiently. It rejected the capitalist market as the regulator of production, allocation and distribution without replacing it by an alternative system of rational economic calculations. All productions and allocation decisions were made by the administrative system of central planning. The planning problem faced by this system was two-fold: (a) to decide the optimum production plan (i.e., decide what outputs to produce, by using what combination of inputs); and (b) get the enterprises to implement the optimum production plan. In the absence of a market that allowed the members of the society to express their preferences and valuations, it was impossible to solve the first problem. Even if the solution of the first problem were known it would require the setting up of a meticulous system of incentives for the managers and workers of public and collective enterprises to implement the production plan. The system of central planning never faced up to this task. The result was that all these decisions were based essentially on arbitrary administrative decisions with consequent inefficiency of massive proportions. The only reason that growth was high during early periods (and continued to be relatively high in some countries even later) was the enormous sacrifice made by the society in the form of a very high rate of accumulation and the entry of large numbers of workers in the labor force at low rates of remuneration.

It is also clear that economic performance in actually prevailing socialist countries improved whenever the system of incentives was improved and deteriorated whenever incentives were severely downplayed. Thus the all round improvement in the performance of the Soviet economy for over a decade since the early 1950s was largely due to the dismantling of the system of extreme disincentive to agriculture and the reform of enterprise management under Khrushchev. The drastic decline of the Chinese economy during 1959-61 and the decline in growth after the mid 1960s was due largely to the extreme de-emphasis on incentives.

What were the reasons behind this particular orientation of actually prevailing socialism? An explanation that has existed since

before the creation of the first socialist state is the Barone-von Mises argument that rational economic calculation is impossible in a socialist society.<sup>7</sup> This is because of the way they defined a socialist society: one in which all goods and work are allocated administratively and neither the consumers nor the workers are allowed to exercise their preferences. Oscar Lange demonstrated that this was not necessarily the case.<sup>8</sup> It was quite possible for a socialist society to develop a system of rational economic calculations by allowing the consumers to express their preferences in the market for consumption goods and by letting workers freely choose employment in one of the numerous socially owned enterprises. The latter maximized profit while a central planning board decided the overall rate of investment and the price of investment fund.

It may be argued that Lange's model was formulated after the economic institutions of actually prevailing socialism were consolidated in the Soviet Union. By that time the system had given birth to vested interest groups which were committed to its continued existence.<sup>9</sup>

The other major explanation that one encounters is actually related to the point just made. It states that under Stalin the Soviet system had degenerated into a bureaucratic/statist system and that the same fate overtook all existing cases of socialism. These bureaucrats, appropriating the benefits of a statist regime, were not interested in either a truly socialist society or in the efficient use of resources.

There is a problem of incompleteness with this argument. No doubt that by the time Stalin was busy consolidating the Soviet system it had come to suffer from many additional distortions. But the fact remains that long before the beginning of the implementation of Stalin's strategy certain essential aspects of the theory of socialism were fairly clearly outlined in the Soviet Union. That outline demonstrated no awareness for the need for a system of rational economic calculations. Whatever other sources of inspiration Stalin's system might have had, it was also powerfully influenced by the initial orthodoxy. Thus the question remains why the authors of the Bolshevik revolution had not recognized the need for a socialist economic organization that provided for rational economic calculations?

I would like to suggest that the explanation lies in two factors: (a) the *utopianism* that characterized the interpretation of Marxian socialism by the early Marxists starting from Marx himself through Lenin and his followers; and (b) the failure on the part of the early revolutionaries to understand the significance of the *historical anachronism* of socialism in a pre-industrial society. Each of the two factors aggravated the effect of the other. The utopian interpretation did far greater damage to the building of socialism in a pre-industrial

society than it would have done if socialism were to be built, as was foreseen by Marx, in the most advanced industrial societies.

Marx wrote very little on the organization of a socialist society. It was his critique of capitalism that defined the basic characteristic of socialism. It would be a society free of capitalist exploitation, i.e., a society that would not permit the expropriation of surplus value. The *minimum condition* for this is the abolition of private ownership of means of production involving wage labor. Admittedly the fulfilment of this condition would merely be the starting point of socialism whose possibilities would gradually unfold through actual existence.

In the few things that he wrote on the organization of the future socialist society, Marx however defined it in a far more utopian and extreme fashion. The most important document on the subject is the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (Marx [10]) which had a powerful influence in shaping the views of the early revolutionaries. It was also widely invoked by the Maoists at the height of the Cultural Revolution. In this document Marx extends his criteria of socialism beyond the system of ownership to encompass the system of payments. A society with social ownership of means of production but adhering to the principle of payment according to work done is, according to him, a society based on the preservation of bourgeois rights. A truly socialist society would have to go far beyond the system of social ownership and make payments to all members of the society according to their respective needs. This clearly presupposed the absence of material incentives. The implicit vision is of a society that has overcome scarcity and/or transformed human agents to such an extent that rational economic calculations and incentives become irrelevant.

*The Critique of the Gotha Program* was Marx's marginal notes to the program of the German Workers' Party, not meant for publication. These were published by Engels after Marx's death, sixteen years after Marx wrote them. For a communication not intended for publication the document was careful enough in noting that the above vision of extremely egalitarian socialism applied to a distant future. It is possible that Marx would have further expanded or amended it if he ever considered publishing it.

Be that as it may, it is quite clear that the picture that the early revolutionaries had of a socialist society was close to the above utopian vision. This is amply shown in the writings of Lenin and his associates immediately after the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the clearest blueprint of the future society is contained in what was intended to be a text book written jointly by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky [2]. It describes the organization of the society in which "the work of production is effected by the gigantic cooperative as a whole", goods "are simply stored in the communal warehouses, and are subsequently delivered to those who need them". . . "There will be an ample quantity of all products, . . . and everyone will be able to get

just as much as he needs. . . A person will take from the communal storehouse precisely as much as he needs, no more. . . Money will then have no value." And all this was going to happen in twenty to thirty years. There was a clear expectation that the immense productive potential of capitalism, brought under the discipline and control of the society, would soon make scarcity and incentives things of the past and, in Bukharin's words, render political economy irrelevant as a discipline.

This utopian vision very strongly shaped the initial policies of the Bolsheviks and the thinking of many who came later. Lenin's dramatic change of direction with the New Economic Policy might have been a profound realization on his part that the vision was flawed and had he lived long enough he might have succeeded in altering the vision. In reality, the NEP was interpreted as a tactical retreat, not a fundamental revision of the original vision.

What seems remarkable is that the vision should have persisted in spite of the fact that socialist revolution triumphed not in the advanced industrial societies but in backward pre-industrial societies. At least three implications of this anachronistic development should have been obvious: (a) Overcoming scarcity in a socialist society became a far more distant prospect; (b) The hope of reducing the material orientation of the human agents became drastically reduced due to the demonstration effect of the most advanced economies under capitalism; and (c) the socialist societies were simultaneously engaged in two major transformations, transition to socialism and catching up with the level of material production of the most advanced countries. Moreover, these tasks had to be accomplished with the meager source of domestic surplus available to them. Efficient use of resources was of paramount importance. Rational economic calculations and incentives were indispensable.

Marx wrote a good deal about development under capitalism. But he had no theory of economic development under socialism. Such a theory was redundant in view of his belief that socialism will occur in highly developed countries. Economic development was the historical task of capitalism.

History did not fulfil this expectation. Pre-industrial socialist countries had to find a theory of development to go with the Marxian shell of social ownership of means of production. This was done in a framework of complete neglect of rational economic calculations and incentives. Squeezing surplus out of the biggest sector, agriculture, was the obvious mechanism chosen for capital accumulation. This, rather than its supposed conformity with socialist principles of ownership, was the decisive factor in making agricultural collectivization an essential part of the strategy. The massive negative impact on incentives was not of any concern. Production decisions were similarly

based on administrative dictates that were essentially arbitrary in the absence of any objective criteria of valuing products and their inputs.<sup>11</sup>

Why did the later socialists follow much the same policies? Why is it that the Chinese, whose strategy of revolution was fundamentally different from the strategy recommended by Stalin and the Comintern, came to adopt most of the institutions of Soviet socialism? The answer must lie in the power of the original utopian formulation of socialism. By the time of the Chinese revolution it had been embellished with additional attributes; collectivization and central planning had become parts of the definition of socialism. Mao's otherwise questioning mind failed to realize that these institutions, while consistent with the utopian vision, did not fit reality. In spite of all the evidence of Mao's doubts about many aspects of Stalin's economic policies, his justification of collectivization is almost exactly the same as Stalin's a quarter of a century before.<sup>12</sup>

#### THE COUNTERFACTUAL

What might have been the characteristics of actually prevailing socialism if it were interpreted pragmatically and due adjustments were made for its unexpected occurrence in pre-industrial societies? I shall outline the basic features of such an alternative form of socialism without trying to be comprehensive.<sup>13</sup> Social ownership would have been the prevalent form of ownership. Individual ownership would however have prevailed widely in agriculture, handicrafts and small-scale services. Cooperative ownership would be encouraged. Private employment of wage labor would remain illegal. Public enterprises would be operated on the basis of profitability in a market in which buyers would exercise their choice much as the public enterprises in capitalist countries do. The state would of course intervene for a variety of reasons, such as externality, protection of infant industries etc. Workers would choose employment from the available alternative public enterprises, join cooperatives or employ themselves. Public enterprises would be managed by paid managers possibly with the participation of workers. Managers of public enterprises would be rewarded mainly on the basis of profit earned and the reward for the workers would be related to their productivity and the overall profitability of the enterprise.

Would such a system work? More specifically, let us address the following major sources of skepticism about the feasibility and efficiency of this alternative form of socialism:

(a) Would the coexistence of the different systems of ownership be feasible and efficient?

(b) Would the system be able to generate a sufficiently high rate of growth in material output?

(c) Would the system provide a socially acceptable distribution of income?

(d) Would the system be susceptible to bureaucratic degeneration as the actually prevailing socialist countries are alleged to have been?

*The System of Ownership*

On the system of ownership Kornai [6] has noted the dilemma of those reforming socialist countries which have permitted private enterprise to coexist with the overwhelmingly dominant public enterprises. The shortage and inflexibility of the system artificially raises the profitability of private enterprise far beyond what would happen in a competitive framework. When the private entrepreneurs try to expand by investing their high profit the system discriminates against them by denying them access to resources. This is because of the deep prejudice against private activity and the public envy of high private incomes which are largely the results of the irrationality of the system itself. Kornai has described the relationship as a marriage between an anti-semitic and a Jewess. The system needs the private sector because of its flexibility and ability to deliver services that the public enterprises, *under the highly distorted system*, are unable to provide. And yet the system is so deeply prejudiced against the private sector that an efficient partnership becomes impossible.

In the proposed outline individual enterprises would have no restraint except the size of available family labor. Their profits would not be artificially inflated as the operation of the economy would not result in shortages and scarcities. Easy access to appropriately priced resources and education and training would reduce the rent of individual entrepreneurship.

Individual and public enterprises would specialize in different activities according to their comparative advantage based on their 'resource endowment'.<sup>14</sup> Individual enterprises would be concentrated in sectors in which economies of scale are not important, e.g., agriculture, small-scale service and manufacturing activities.

Would there be enough activities of this type? Or would the economy suffer from the inability to exploit economies of scale? There appears to be strong evidence that there are plenty of activities of this type. Agriculture in densely populated countries is an obvious example. But it appears that much of agriculture in land-abundant countries could also belong to this category. Consider the experience of the Soviet Union itself. One of Stalin's main arguments in favour of collectivization was that peasant ownership was incompatible with the economies of scale in mechanization. And yet the Kolkhozy were not allowed to own tractors or other major equipment which were all vested in the state-owned Machine Tractor Stations (MTS). The Kolkhozy bought the services of these machines from the MTS until Khrushchev changed the rules in the 1950s. Economies of scale in mechanization did not require collectivization. The MTS could have



attained the same economies of scale by selling their services to individual peasants.<sup>15</sup>

Agriculture is not the only sector where potential economies of scale do not rule out efficient individual enterprise. Trade, transport, personal services and handicrafts are other examples of activities in which individual enterprises would thrive.

What about the possibility that workers and employers would enter into collusion and set up private enterprise based on hired labor under the guise of cooperatives? This would occur if a worker's alternative earning (as an individual entrepreneur or as a worker in a public enterprise) is lower than his earning as a hired worker in an individual enterprise. Being exploited in the Marxian sense would then guarantee higher income for the worker. No amount of legal safeguard would succeed in preventing the spread of private wage labour and capitalism in this situation. This would ultimately destroy the basis of the society's rejection of private wage labor and capitalism.

There would be two possible guarantees against this outcome. The first is the efficiency and profitability of the socially owned enterprises. If productivity in these enterprises is high enough to sustain employment at a wage i.e. higher than the wage in private employment then there would be no basis for private wage employment. The other guarantee is that access to education and training would be so widespread and the access to productive resources would be so equitable that there would be few obstacles in the way of a worker becoming an individual entrepreneur of average efficiency. These are the guarantees whose success would determine the society's continued belief in the superiority of the socialist system.<sup>16</sup>

Could socially owned enterprises operate with efficiency? In today's world the dominant orthodoxy often seems to be that public enterprises are inherently inefficient. A more appropriate view is that these operate inefficiently when the overall policy structure and incentive system are not geared to promote efficiency. Today's corporate enterprises are managed by salaried personnel just as the public enterprises are. It is hard to see why the one would not react to *given rules and incentives* the way the other does. Once the principles of profitability and market test are applied rigorously, public enterprises are likely to perform efficiently. Examples of efficient public enterprises are not at all difficult to find in capitalist countries.

### *The Rate of Growth*

Would this system be able to generate as rapid growth as the Soviet and Chinese economies achieved in the early phases of their development? The rate of involuntary surplus extraction from agriculture would be lower because of the avoidance of collectivization and the reliance on an incentive system that would price things appropriately (rather than arbitrarily to the disadvantage of the

agricultural sector as in the historical cases of Soviet Union and China). This would however be offset by: (a) a higher growth of agricultural output prompted by greater incentives; and (b) a greater efficiency of factor use throughout the economy. *A priori* it is hard to argue that the rate of growth of the economy would be anything but higher, and far more sustainable, than in the historical case of actually prevailing socialism.

#### *Distribution of Income*

Would this system provide a distribution of income that would be less egalitarian than the one achieved by actually prevailing socialism? All indications point to a negative answer. In agriculture, egalitarian peasant farming is likely to provide at least as equal a distribution of income as collective agriculture as long as the principle of distribution in the latter is payment according to productivity. Available evidence suggests that the distribution of income from private plots was more egalitarian than the distribution of collective income in both Soviet Central Asia and China.<sup>17</sup> As noted above, the high incomes of the private entrepreneurs in the socialist countries is due to their artificially high profitability caused by shortages and rigidities of the system of planning by command. In a system of appropriate incentives and rational market calculations incomes from private activities would be modest.

#### *The Danger of Bureaucratic Degeneration*

Would this system be as susceptible to a bureaucratic/statist degeneration as actually prevailing socialism was? All one can say is that the danger would be far less. The system would not have potential rent and scarcity premia of such magnitude as to induce as great a struggle for bureaucratic control of administrative machinery as in the historical case of actually prevailing socialism. The avoidance of involuntary collectivization of and 'primitive socialist accumulation' on agriculture would create the basis for broad coalition among the masses. This should make democratic institutions far more feasible than was the case under actually prevailing socialism.

#### HOW DOES THE ON-GOING REFORM PROGRAM COMPARE WITH THE COUNTERFACTUAL?

The on-going reform in those socialist countries which continue to retain at least a rhetorical commitment to socialism is *not* moving in the direction of the system described in the counterfactual and the prospect of their transition to such a system is exceedingly remote. Let me explain each of these two assertions in turn.

In the on-going reform programs—especially of the type that has thrived in China in which a lot of success has been claimed for it—the primary emphasis has so far been on reforming the system of ownership

by permitting private enterprise in large parts of the economy. In China the entire agricultural sector has been decollectivized and private ownership has been promoted in many non-agricultural sectors. Private wage hiring has been legal since 1983 and its incidence has grown rapidly. Such ownership reform has been, or is about to be implemented elsewhere in the socialist countries. Thus the reform programs have already violated the defining characteristic of the counterfactual, viz., the absence of the expropriation of surplus value.

We have also argued that in the absence of a rational system of incentives and market it is not possible to secure proper behavior on the part of the private sector. Thus reform of incentives, prices and markets must precede the reform of the system of ownership if the latter is to function properly. There is little that the on-going reform programs have achieved in this area. The resistance must have come from the entrenched bureaucrats and other beneficiaries of the present system of shortages and rigidities, possibly including the existing private entrepreneurs.

I would also like to make a distinction between the initial organization of socialism and the reform of actually prevailing socialism. The desirability of individual ownership in the former does not necessarily imply that functioning collective institutions in the latter should be dismantled. Much of the cost of collectivization was the cost incurred during transition. That is a powerful argument against avoiding collectivization to start with. However, once the cost of transition has been incurred it is doubtful if a wholesale reversal of the system of collective ownership is equally desirable. There is ample evidence to suggest that collective ownership *per se* was not an obstacle to agricultural development in Soviet Union or China, *especially after the initial transition*. Whenever the extremes of disincentives were avoided these collective institutions succeeded in generating rapid growth, equity, high accumulation and the provision of social services at low cost. For evidence one needs only to look at the example of Soviet Central Asia, which escaped the adverse terms of trade that Stalin imposed on the rest of Soviet agriculture (Khan and Ghai [5]), the initial transition to complete collectivization in China, and the years immediately after the reorganization of the Chinese communes on the basis of a reasonable system of incentives in 1962 after the disastrous Great Leap Forward. In all these cases rapid growth took place within the framework of collective agriculture. A socialist reform program in China probably could have done with a much more modest reform of the system of ownership: retaining the commune system with an expanded role for private plots and a much improved system of incentives, permitting individual ownership elsewhere in the economy but preventing private wage labor. Instead of being preoccupied with the system of ownership the reform program should have focused on the system of incentives and rational market. That this has not

happened can only be explained by the opposition of the privileged bureaucrats and other recipients of scarcity premia that are the essential characteristics of the system. The possible overthrow of these entrenched groups is too messy a circumstance to act as the midwife of a rational and feasible system of socialism as described in the counterfactual.

I am very grateful to my colleagues, Stephen Cullenberg and Victor Lippit, for their helpful comments and suggestions.

#### NOTES

1. These are western estimates based on the facts obtained from the Soviet sources. See Ofer [13].
2. Official Soviet estimates of growth are higher than the western estimates. They however confirm the sharply declining trend in growth in GNP and productivity since 1970.
3. Chinese growth rates are trends based on the official time series published in China in recent years. See State Statistical Bureau [14].
4. These Gini coefficients are reported in Morrison [11]. For 1975 the Soviet Gini coefficient was 0.30 without an allowance for the non-monetary income of the elite and 0.34 with an allowance for the non-monetary income of the elite. The Gini coefficient was 0.23 for Denmark (1963), 0.27 for Sweden (1970), 0.35 for the then Federal Republic of Germany (1969), 0.37 for France (1973) and 0.38 for the U.S.A. (1976).
5. For evidence see Khan [4], Griffin and Saith [3] and World Bank [16].
6. This would appear to be the conclusion especially if these countries are placed in a Kuznets curve along with other countries.
7. See Barone [1] and von Mises [15].
8. See Lange [7].
9. Lange's model does not appear to have been taken seriously in any socialist society including his own although he became an important personality in socialist Poland.
10. See, for example, Lenin [8].
11. I also believe that the rejection of political democracy by the Bolsheviks was largely a consequence of the need for an instrument of revolution in a pre-industrial society in which the vanguards of revolution—the industrial proletariat—were a tiny minority. The choice of a strategy of accumulation that alienated the vast peasantry exacerbated the situation by destroying the possibility of a meaningful coalition with them.
12. See Mao [9]. Like Stalin before him Mao argued that collectivization was necessary to enable agriculture to reap the benefits of economies of scale of mechanization and to prevent the small and weak peasants being gobbled up by the more efficient. It is also important to note that the Chinese revolution was immensely popular and the first few years after the revolution saw a remarkable national consensus on which a popularly democratic system might have been based. That this was never attempted must mean that in some sense 'dictatorship', a product of the particular circumstances of the Soviet Union, had also become a part of the vision.
13. More complete blueprints of 'feasible socialism' have been prepared by others, e.g., Nove [12]. The present outline draws upon these models.
14. There would also be plenty of opportunity of vertical complementarity of the two types of ownership.
15. Admittedly, the type of equipment used would depend on the size structure of plots which could differ between individual and collective ownership. But this is a different issue. In any case it is widely believed that the size of equipment in Soviet agriculture was inappropriate.

16. In the actually prevailing socialist countries these conditions were not fulfilled. This is the reason why the enthusiasm for private enterprise has been so great in China in the wake of economic reforms. This also explains why workers have eagerly queued up for the privilege of being 'exploited' by foreign capital in these countries.
17. See Khan and Ghai [5] and Griffin and Saith [3].

## REFERENCES

1. E. Barone, 'The Ministry of Production in the Collectivist State', reprinted in A. Nove and D.M. Nuti (ed.), *Socialist Economics*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.
2. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, Penguin, London 1972.
3. Keith Griffin and Ashwani Saith, *Growth and Equality in Rural China*, ILO/ARTEP and Maruzen, Singapore, 1981.
4. A.R. Khan, 'The Distribution of Income in Rural China', in ILO, *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia*, Geneva 1977.
5. A.R. Khan and D.P. Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, Macmillan, London, 1979.
6. J. Kornai, *The Affinity between Ownership and Coordination Mechanisms*, WIDER, Helsinki, 1990.
7. O. Lange, 'On the Economic Theory of Socialism', reprinted in A. Nove and D.M. Nuti, op. cit.
8. V.I. Lenin, 'From the Destruction of the Old Social System to the Creation of the New', excerpted in A. Nove and D.M. Nuti, op. cit.
9. Mao Zedong, 'On the Question of Agricultural Cooperation', *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, Beijing, 1971.
10. K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1972.
11. C. Morrison, 'Income Distribution in East European and Western Countries', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 8, No.2, 1984.
12. A. Nove, *Economics of Feasible Socialism*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1983.
13. Gur Ofer, 'Soviet Economic Growth, 1928-1985', *The Journal of Economic Literature*, December 1987.
14. State Statistical Bureau, *Statistical Year Book of China*, 1987.
15. L. Von Mises, 'Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth', in A. Nove and D.M. Nuti, op. cit.
16. World Bank, *China: Long-Term Development: Issues and Options*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1985.

ROBERT POLLIN AND ALEXANDER COCKBURN\*

## *The World, the Free Market and the Left\*\**

A year ago the capitalist future appeared, in the auguries of its toastmasters, as rosy as the old Socialist Realist posters once were in their visions of the shining path. Eastern Europe was commencing its economic renewal, along lines administered by crusading theorists of the free market and kept under critical review by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the Soviet Union itself the outlines of Gorbachev's nebulous *perestroika* were firming satisfactorily into a profile of capitalist reform, against a backdrop of economic disintegration advertised most vividly by appeals for food baskets from the West

The surrender by the Soviet Union of any weighty adversarial role seemed, in the hopes of strategists in Washington, to announce a congenial era in the economic arrangements of the world, with leadership by the major capitalist powers disposing planetary capital, resources and trade opportunities. So ebullient was the rhetoric that it was predicted that normal laws of economic motion were to be permanently suspended, trend lines on the graph of the business cycle sustained always at a pleasurable altitude, growth ever on the rise.

Such were the imagined outlines of the 'new world order' as displayed in the posters of Capitalist Realism. A year later the ebullience is gone, and though it would be a mistake to say that the long-term optimism of the free-marketeters has dissipated, shadows have crept over the rosy landscape of their expectations.

The Eastern European economies are reeling under three savage blows: the end of cheap Soviet energy, which had fueled their postwar growth; unemployment surging to levels unfamiliar to local popula-

---

\* Robert Pollin teaches economics at the University of California, Riverside, and is on the National Steering Committee of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE). Alexander Cockburn's column 'Beat the Devil' appears every other week in *The Nation*.

\*\* This article was first published in *The Nation* magazine, The Nation Company Inc., February 25, 1991.

tions though well known to workers farther west; a catastrophic shortfall—\$10 billion or more—in anticipated capital investment from the West. Talk of emulating the economies of Sweden or Austria is now being replaced by gloomy perusal of the statistics of Mexico.

In the Soviet Union the best-known prophet of the free market, Stanislav Shatalin, issues denunciations of Gorbachev from his hospital bed while detachments of the K.G.B. wage war on 'economic crime,' targeting profiteers, hoarders, price gougers and other dutiful practitioners of Free Market 101.

If the world map resembles a poster, it is one displaying many of the less welcome features of the first four decades of the century. Furthermore, the world's foremost capitalist power is fighting the effects of serious recession with that negation of free-market theory, military orders from the state. In the fourth quarter of 1990 the gross national product of the United States fell by 2.1 per cent, the worst drop since the 3.2 per cent figure for the third quarter of 1983. The latest unemployment figures, for December, showed a loss of 232,000 jobs. This economic decline would have been far worse but for a December rise of 4.4 per cent in orders for durable goods, reflecting the military buildup for the war against Iraq.

Military spending will help offset the recession in the short term, as the Bush government dumps inventory onto Iraqi troops and civilians. Alan Greenspan testified to Congress in the second week of the war that its economic consequences would be slight. One week later he retracted by saying the picture would change dramatically if the war lasted longer than three months. The deficit promises to be large enough to test even the most hardened nerves: \$318 billion, including as much as \$1 billion a day in war costs, plus billions more in new overseas aid and debt forgiveness required to secure favourable U.N. votes and hold together the 'coalition'. And these compounding billions still do not take into account the cost of sustaining a banking system so shaky that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation is itself approaching bankruptcy.

Far from being on the threshold of a new world order the major capitalist powers face a period of increasing rivalry, as the rows that led to the temporary collapse of the GATT trade talks in December illustrated. It may have lacked the drama of a Scud, but the decision of the German Bundesbank to raise interest rates at the end of January sent a potent and unappetizing message to the U.S.-U.K. faction: Germany was prepared to lend money—at a profit of course—to finance the war but would not let the coalition pay for this war through cheap deficit financing.

Nowhere do the promises of a year ago look more empty than from the perspective of the Third World. The outlook was never good and, with higher prices for oil, lower prices for commodities, larger interest payments on their debt and, throughout the Near East and Southeast

Asia, the calamitous disappearance of remittances from workers in the Persian Gulf region (formerly, 3 million foreign workers in Kuwait alone), it has become desperate.

So the economic idiom of the free-marketeers is now one of prolonged sacrifice, and the presumptive rewards of free-market capitalism promise to be outstripped by its penalties as the real living standards for peoples supposedly basking in its blessings continue to fall. It is therefore a good moment to examine the fundamental claims of the free-marketeers. Does the present situation signal merely an uncomfortable detour along a path that is sound, following a model essentially impregnable in its assumptions? Is the socialist path forever a cul-de-sac, one of history's false turns in the road?

#### THE MARKET LOVE FEAST

The end of the eighties boom, imploding through 1990, did not slow the rush of converts to market discipline. In the course of just a couple of weeks last fall, two governments run by social democrats made public their conversion. Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, said, 'We are making a radical change in direction' that will, 'among other things, involve the free play of market forces in the determination of prices.' In Sweden, the model to which many leftists originally hoped Eastern Europe would turn, the government announced a deflationary package that cut social benefits, an action widely heralded in the international financial press as a dramatic retreat from more than half a century of left-oriented Keynesianism.

In Latin America, Asia and Africa as well as Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, professed Friedmanites, Thatcherites and Reaganites hold high office: Brazil's President, Fernando Collor de Mello, styles himself the 'C.E.O. of Brazil Inc.' Vietnam's top economic strategist is Nguyen Zuan Oanh, a man whose c.v. includes a stint as acting Prime Minister for the U.S. puppet regime in South Vietnam and a staff position at the International Monetary Fund. In Algeria, Economics Minister Ghazi Hidouci says his government's 'simple' plan for overcoming the country's economic crisis is to turn away from twenty-eight years of state socialism and toward private enterprise and a free market. Mozambique has also abandoned its commitment to socialism and now aggressively seeks investors from South Africa. It was recently rewarded with a nearly interest-free \$112 million loan from the I.M.F. for its conversion to free-market policies.

And despite mounting crisis, free-market thinking continues its advance in Eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev has for now abandoned his firm judgement of just four months ago that 'the whole world experience proved the vitality and efficiency of the market economy.' Yet such statements still represent the views of a wide swath, and perhaps the majority, of leading Soviet policy makers. In Poland, Lech Walesa won the presidency stressing the



urgency of an accelerated turn to the market and, after taking office, elevated free-market economist Krzysztof Bielecki to Prime Minister and reappointed the administrator of Poland's shock therapy, Leszek Balcerowicz, as Finance Minister. In Czechoslovakia, Finance Minister and devout free-marketeer Vaclav Klaus has taken firm control of economic policy in addition to becoming chair of Civic Forum [see George Black, 'Prague Gets the Chicago Treatment,' December 10, 1990].

With a few variations to account for local conditions, the formulas being advanced throughout the world are the same: in the short term, rapid and deep cut in wages, social spending and subsidies to control inflation and provide a climate of stability for business; in the long term, fundamental restructuring, involving the deregulation of business, wholesale sell-offs of public-sector enterprises, elimination of tariffs and other barriers to international trade, and inducements to foreign multinational corporations.

This passion for the free market has been nourished from many sources, beginning with the ideological premise of Adam Smith that through markets each individual's free and selfish pursuit of gain will be transformed 'as if by an invisible hand' to a socially optimal result. The ideological appeal is greatest in Eastern Europe, where the discrediting of communism has encouraged the embrace of whatever seems most contrary to the old order. Elsewhere the role of ideology has been less important than other factors—primarily, slow growth or even actual decline in real incomes, ossified institutions, crippling levels of indebtedness. Whether in Sweden, Jamaica, Poland, Brazil, Mozambique or any other stricken economy, governments faced crisis and had to change. But how? Many have sought enlightenment from the economies they regard as successful: those of the United States, Britain, Japan, South Korea and recently even Chile, all supposedly splendid advertisements for free-market capitalism.

Beyond those prods, there is the coercion of simple desperation, an influence that cannot be overestimated. Governments believe that they cannot restructure without substantial aid, credit and investment. This can come only from the advanced capitalist countries and international lending institutions—primarily the I.M.F., World Bank, U.S. government and multinational banks—and the way to qualify for such support is by demonstrating a commitment to the free-market model. In fact, the ultimate benefit of external support is debatable, but there is no doubt that today the only way to get such support is to sing in the free-market choir.

This 'linkage' has been demonstrated most blatantly in Africa, where average living standards fell by 20 per cent during the 1980s. According to a recent World Bank report, African countries with strong free-market 'structural adjustment' programs in place netted an 18.7 per cent average annual increase in foreign aid between 1985 and 1987. Ghana saw its foreign aid quadruple between 1983 and 1988

immediately after head-of-state Jerry Rawlings became a free-market true believer. In fact, despite its population of only 14 million, Ghana received more interest-free loans from the World Bank in 1988 than any country except China and India. At the same time, countries without free-market adjustment programs saw their foreign aid decline by an average of 4.7 per cent a year. So it is not surprising that as of 1989, thirty of the fifty-one African countries had formally adopted I.M.F. and World Bank-supported programs and several others were pursuing policies that largely follow the I.M.F./World Bank line.

Finally, there is the spur of self-interest. However much a gamble a free-market approach may be for society at large, it almost certainly benefits the class of highly educated and internationally connected professionals—the 'travelling classes, technicians and business people—that so strongly supports it. Meanwhile, the masses being beckoned to the virtues of such a system seem wary if not downright resistant. In Poland, Solidarity was able to push through its austerity programs only after the composition of the party had shifted dramatically from workers to intellectuals, and December's presidential runoff demonstrated a widespread, if unfocused, opposition to the government's economic strategy. In Czechoslovakia, Finance Minister Klaus is widely opposed, reportedly even by President Vaclav Havel, but he proceeds apace because his opponents lack a coherent alternative program. Throughout Eastern Europe polls show a large majority of rural families—95 per cent in the former East Germany, 90 per cent in Czechoslovakia and 70 per cent in Bulgaria and Hungary—have no desire to take up private farming as a full-time occupation. Similar patterns hold for Africa and Latin America. Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria and Algeria all experienced bloody street rioting in recent years in response to the sudden price increases or severe cutbacks in public expenditures resulting from I.M.F. free-market adjustment programs. Five hundred people died in Algeria's 1988 riots. In Sudan, Jaafar el-Nimeiry's government was toppled in 1985 after an I.M.F.-approved plan sparked an urban insurrection. Zambia's President, Kenneth Kaunda, had to cancel an I.M.F.-approved program in 1987 after food riots killed fifteen people.

The free-market program of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in Mexico also faces widespread opposition. Even his predecessor and political sponsor, Miguel de la Madrid, was recently moved to observe, 'We cannot have a blind faith in the market, in private enterprise and in businessmen as regards distribution of wealth and social justice.' Salinas thus increasingly relies on repression to advance his program. In Brazil, Collor was elected in 1989 by a small majority over his leftist opponent, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, not because people wanted an unbridled free-marketeer but because, on the contrary, he sold himself as a populist, clean-government candidate [see Ken Silvertstein, 'Shock Treatment for the Poor,' November 12, 1990].

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of the disparity between mass opinion and government action can be found in Peru. In last June's presidential election, Alberto Fujimori was able to crush Mario Vargas Llosa largely because he challenged Vargas Llosa's advocacy of free-market shock therapy. Yet since taking office in August, Fujimori has not hesitated to carry out the standard austerity policies, and one of the first advisers he summoned to Lima was Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the Svengali of Poland's crash conversion to mass unemployment and kindred joys of the free market.

But we cannot repudiate the arguments of free-market governments purely because they face opposition. Could it be, as free-marketeers remind us, that opponents of the model are too preoccupied with the short-term pain that inevitably precedes long-term gain? Let us then fix our gaze on the longer term. Do the celebration of the market and the rejection of large-scale government intervention find justification in the recent historical record? Is it true that governments that regulate and redistribute are the cause of the indisputable crisis faced by so many of the world's economies, and that free-market capitalism can resolve those crises? In fact, such conclusions are entirely unwarranted, based on myths and fallacies which, shiny with use by mainstream economists and regnant economic powers, have achieved the status of certitude.

#### MYTH 1: SOCIALIST CENTRAL PLANNING HAS BEEN A DISASTER

The failures of central planning under what were the 'actually existing' socialist governments are now universally understood—chief among them, the way in which the lack of democracy engendered an all-powerful, stifling bureaucracy. Central premises of socialism were, time and again, debauched. But substantial successes should not be forgotten. During the early phases of central planning the Soviet Union and China recorded stunning growth. In the period of the first two five-year plans, from 1928 to 1937, while the West was suffering through its worst depression, Soviet industrial growth as measured by conservative Western analysts averaged more than 12 per cent. Under the duress of war mobilization and Stalinist purges, growth fell during the third five-year plan, but it took off again after World War II. C.I.A. estimates place industrial growth at an average of 9.3 per cent during the 1950s, more than twice the rate in the United States over the same period. Thus did Khrushchev's famous boast, 'Whether or not you like it, history is on our side; we will bury you,' resonate among the Western diplomats who heard it in 1956. Even Friedrich von Hayek, the renowned free-market economist and arch-foe of central planning, acknowledged 'the conspicuous successes which the Russians have achieved in certain fields.'

In China, industrial growth averaged 11.2 per cent between 1952 and 1978. Allowing for misallocations of resources and uneven quality of

output, this was still an extraordinary achievement, creating from a near void the foundations for China's economic modernization. In terms of living standards, take changes in life expectancy at birth, a social indicator regarded as the most standardized and reliable measure of a population's physical well-being. When the Communists came to power in 1949 average life expectancy was around 40 years. It had risen almost ten years by 1957—that is, until the period of the Great Leap Forward, which produced a severe famine and a decline in life expectancy. After the Great Leap Forward, life expectancy regained its rapid rate of progress until the early 1970s. Since the late 1970s—from the time Deng Xiaoping attained power and began implementing market-oriented reforms—it has not improved. Indeed, according to some measures, it has actually declined since the late 1970s. Nevertheless, as of 1988 life expectancy in China was 70 years, a full decade more than the average in those countries that the World Bank characterizes as low income. Thus the Harvard economist Amartya Sen observes that in China, 'the basic commitment of the political leadership—not unrelated to Marxist ideology—to eradicate hunger and deprivation has certainly proved to be a major asset in eliminating systematic penury,' even though, as Sen makes clear, 'it was not able to prevent the big famine, when a confused and dogmatic political leadership was unable to cope with a failure they did not expect and could not explain.'

Cuba has also attained remarkable achievements through the egalitarian ethos underlying its planning apparatus. By any health or social indicator, Cuba stands well ahead of all other Latin American countries. For example, life expectancy in Cuba in 1988 was 76 years, while the average for Mexico, Brazil and Argentina—Latin America's three largest economies—was 69, 65 and 71 years, respectively. Cuba has also virtually eliminated illiteracy, and its rate of infant mortality of twelve per thousand live births is comparable to the U.S. figure of ten per thousand.

Relative to those other countries in the Caribbean and in Central America, Cuba's economy has also been successful in producing a wide range of commodities both for domestic consumption and for export. Most impressive has been its development of a capital goods industry, the silver lining of the devastating thirty-one-year U.S. embargo. Andrew Zimbalist, an economist at Smith College and an expert on the Cuban economy, reports that 'approximately one-quarter of investment spending on capital goods in the 1980s was on machinery and equipment produced in Cuba, a level no other third world economy the size of Cuba has attained.' Items being manufactured for domestic use now include irrigation equipment, air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment, sugarcane harvesting machinery, semiconductors, batteries and railroad cars. Among its nontraditional exports Cuba counts shellfish,

citrus fruit, medicine, iron and steel products, nonelectrical machinery and the cowhide baseball.

It is popular to attribute the present crisis in the Cuban economy to some inherent failure of socialism, to inefficiency and moribund central planning, and to credit any of its successes to past infusions of Soviet aid. Of course, there have been errors and inefficiencies, but the problems plaguing the economy can be explained mainly by Cuba's status as a Third World island in a straitened international climate: the dissolution of favorable trade relations with Eastern Europe, higher oil prices, falling sugar prices and hard currency in desperately short supply. As for Soviet aid, while it has been essential, its effects have been overstated. When properly measured, Soviet aid accounted for 6 to 7 per cent of Cuba's national income. That is high by Latin standards but not unique. Other Latin countries, including Bolivia, Costa Rica, Haiti and Honduras, have received comparable levels of aid relative to the size of their economies, but without attaining comparable results.

Even in Eastern Europe, where the official rejection of central planning has been most intense, the picture is not one-sided. Take agriculture, a favorable experience almost never acknowledged in the West. Communist governments did force collectivization onto the peasantry in most Eastern European countries. Nevertheless, agricultural output and incomes rose sharply from the early 1960s to the 1980s. More important, the insecurity and heavy work burdens traditionally attached to individual farming have been mitigated through collective farming. Frederic Pryor, a professor at Swarthmore who studies Eastern European economies, recently wrote:

In Slovakia about three quarters of the farmers polled agreed that the work of collective farmers was easier than that of individual farmers. In East Germany over half of the 453 farmers polled noted that cooperative farmers had more free time than individual farmers (McCardle and Boénau, 1984) and, moreover, between 55 and 65 per cent stressed that in comparison to capitalist farmers, they had no market worries, material or social insecurity, or anxieties over their own economic existence. In Hungary this sentiment was stated more bluntly to me in individual conversations by several specialists: farmers on collective and state farms have too easy a life ever to want to return to individual farming.

Pryor recognizes that such attitudes might change if subsidies to collective or state farms are removed. But even without such subsidies, it is unlikely that primarily individualized farming will achieve the levels of both efficiency and personal security that are attainable when farmer share the costs of machinery, fertilizer, irrigation and harvesting. It should also not be forgotten that farming in Germany,

France, Britain, Ireland and other Western European countries, as well as in the United States, depends on gigantic subsidies.

The anticipated changes in quality of life in Eastern Europe attendant upon free-market restructuring were brusquely evoked by Czechoslovakia's transition Vice Premier, Valtr Komarek: 'It is not going to be the country house every weekend, but working day and night. It is a big shift from the comfortable life we've been having. People do not realize how comfortably and without worry they have been living up to now.' Even if only a minority lived according to the standards described by Komarek—comfortably, without worry and with regular country-house weekends—one can hardly claim that unyielding poverty has been central planning's only legacy.

At the same time, the socialist central planning system had been building toward a crisis since the early 1970s. For the Soviet Union especially, the costs of competition with the West were draining its resources. The attempts to stimulate the socialist economies by opening trade relations with the West were largely failures, leaving Poland, among others, in a Third World-style debt crisis.

But central planning also faced more fundamental difficulties. Over time, it showed itself to be much more capable of mobilizing unutilized resources than managing an economy of increasing complexity. Workers, meanwhile, did lack motivation. This is not, however, a natural byproduct of guaranteed full employment, the once vaunted but now maligned feature of labor conditions under central planning. The problem with authoritarian central planning is that it creates no affirmative work incentives to replace hunger and insecurity, the traditional prods to labor effort associated with capitalism. Material incentives in the socialist countries were too weak because of consumer goods shortages, and moral exhortation failed so long as workers had no control over work-place conditions, production decisions or labor organizations. Repression became the only remaining motivator, and this proved insufficient unless applied with a vehemence worthy of Stalin.

#### MYTH 2: GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION UNDER CAPITALISM HAS ALSO BEEN A FAILURE

Let's look first at Latin America, where statist policies are blamed for that region's continued underdevelopment and, in particular, for the debt crisis and 'lost decade' of the 1980s. Beginning in the mid-1930s, most governments of Latin America embarked on heavily interventionist policies. Their main idea was to encourage domestic manufacturing, a policy rooted in the nationalist/populist movements led by such figures as Cardenas in Mexico, Vargas in Brazil and Peron in Argentina. Through a plan of 'import substitution' local industries would develop the capacity to supply manufactured goods that would otherwise be imported, thus providing the motor for Latin

industrialization. These policies presented no challenge to existing internal class relations, but they did reject the free-market doctrines of free trade and minimal government. High tariffs discouraged imports while subsidies and public enterprises, which sold their products locally at below-market prices, supported domestic manufacturers.

The model was largely successful for a while. Mexico, Argentina and Brazil did attain their most immediate goal of producing domestic substitutes for nonluxury consumer goods. They all began to develop machine-building capacity as well during the 1960s, and by the early 1970s the industrialized sectors of those economies started to export on the world market. The growth of per capita income was also generally high over the 1950s and 1960s.

In the end the strategy proved unsustainable not because it violated the tenets of free-market capitalism but because other features of capitalism obtruded. Income distribution remained highly unequal, so domestic purchasing power never widened sufficiently to absorb the goods generated by the new industrial capacity. Even more damaging, the Latin economies were never able to break their chronic and debilitating dependence on foreign capital, though this was the explicit aim of the strategy.

Thus, despite the nationalist rhetoric that accompanied import substitution policies, implementation of the strategy relied both on imports of equipment and technology and on investment by multinationals. In Brazil, multinational firms accounted for 44 per cent of all domestic sales in 1965, while private domestic firms and state enterprises accounted for 28 per cent each. By 1972 multinationals controlled 50 per cent of total manufacturing assets in both Brazil and Mexico. This led to chronic financial difficulties, particularly balance of payments deficits, as foreign multinationals remitted profits to the head office back home. By the early 1970s, the model was exhausted. And like well-heeled drug pushers, international bankers moved in, enticing Latin governments, which, strapped for funds and bereft of fresh development ideas, succumbed. International debt thus reactivated the old protectionist/interventionist model, but on an unsustainable foundation of debt. This was the background to the debt crisis of 1982 and the subsequent lost decade of punishing austerity.

There were other problems with the import substitution strategy. Under protectionism some companies refused to risk innovation and never advanced technologically. Those firms also guarded their privileges, lobbying the government against domestic competitors seeking similar protection. Also, the formation of vast bureaucracies encouraged corruption, something to which the Latin economies were particularly vulnerable, since the nationalist movements never broke the power of the merchant capitalists and landed elite who traditionally had grown rich through privilege rather than through productive activity. The tradition of capitalists milking the state in turn made

public enterprises appear much less efficient than they actually were. In the 1980s, Brazil's huge National Steel Company lost an estimated \$2.5 billion selling its products at 40 per cent below market prices to private companies, especially multinational auto makers and food processors.

Still, what is remarkable in the history of import substitution is not that such distortions emerged but rather that, despite them, there was impressive economic progress. As with socialist central planning, a modern industrial base was created in a short period of time and per capita incomes rose substantially. But without an egalitarian ideology or redistributive policies, there were immense gaps between rich and poor.

### MYTH 3: THE PARAGONS OF FREE-MARKETEERISM ARE THE 'MIRACLE' ECONOMIES OF EAST ASIA

With typical hyperbole, Ronald Reagan said in his 1985 'State of the Union Message: 'Many countries in East Asia and the Pacific have few resources other than the enterprise of their own people. But through . . . free markets they've soared ahead of centralized economies.' The problem here is that the Asian economies, especially those of Japan and South Korea, the region's greatest success stories, are not now nor have they ever been free-market economies.

In both planning and strategic financing, the state is dominant. It provides business with export subsidies, protection and cheap money. According to the development economist Aiden Foster-Carter, the South Korean Agricultural system is virtually 'a single gigantic state farm, with the state setting prices, providing inputs and credit, and buying the crop.' By any measure, then, the state has been at least as active as in Latin America. So why have Japan and South Korea succeeded over the long term, in contrast to their Latin counterparts? Free markets can take little credit. In the 1950s, the United States saw both Japan and South Korea as bulwarks against communist expansion and gave them tremendous support. It is often forgotten that besides postwar reconstruction grants, Japan received nearly \$2.2 billion in U.S. military procurement orders from 1950 to 1953 (equal to \$10 billion in 1989 dollars). Such orders accounted for about 65 per cent of Japanese exports over those years. Military Keynesianism, the declared U.S. policy in Paul Nitze's famous planning document N.S.C. 68, was not confined to the United States.

Outright aid to South Korea was even greater. More than 80 per cent of Korean imports in the 1950s were financed by U.S. economic assistance. And in a parallel to Japan's experience during the Korean War, South Korea flourished with procurement contracts during the Vietnam War years. By 1975 such contracts accounted for no less than one-fifth of South Korea's exports of goods and services.



State intervention in East Asia was also more effective than in Latin America. States that subsidize and protect business always risk the misappropriation of resources. That happened in Japan and South Korea, but to an unusual extent the governments there were able to discipline the corporations they protected and subsidized, forcing them to meet product and quality standards necessary to penetrate export markets. In both cases the state's power over the capitalist class was partly the result of a sweeping U.S.-directed land reform in the years immediately following World War II. The United States backed these reforms in hopes of weakening left peasant insurgencies, but their impact—even given erosion over time—was to break the control of landed elites and their mercantile capitalist allies.

Finally, as a matter of conscious policy Japan and South Korea restricted intervention by foreign multinationals, especially during their phases of most rapid growth. While the state aggressively promoted the appropriation of modern technologies by domestic firms, it was not willing to allow foreign firms much purchase on the economy. The United States tolerated such violations of the free-market canon in the interests of the overall anticommunist alliance.

Japan and South Korea are by no means unqualified successes. Wages were low and working conditions harsh during the main period of development and they remain unacceptable today. At least with Japan, this fact contradicts the image of a country of guaranteed employment, high wages and egalitarian labor practices. In reality, the Japanese labor market is highly segmented between a minority of privileged workers in the core corporations and a majority who work long hours at low pay with little security [see Doug Henwood, 'Playing the *Zaiteku* Game,' October 3, 1988]. There is much to oppose in the East Asian model even while its basic lesson—that given favourable circumstances intelligent and aggressive government planning can produce remarkable results—remains compelling.

#### HOLLOW VICTORIES

The embrace of free-market ideology in the United States and Britain can be traced to the long-term stagnation that became evident by the mid-1970s, most clearly in the falling rate of profit. In the United States the average pretax profit rate for nonfinancial corporations had dropped from 14.8 per cent to 5.5 per cent between 1965 and 1974, and in Britain the decline was from 17.7 per cent in 1964 to 6 per cent in 1976. The capitalist response was predictable: restoring profits through lowering the costs of doing business. This meant pushing down wages, reducing taxes for corporations and the rich, eroding organized labor and weakening or removing regulations and workplace restrictions. State power shifted visibly in favour of the rich through the shriveling of social welfare programs and, in Britain, the sale of public enterprises, the latest being the state electrical utility.

Still, economic performance in the United States and Britain in the 1980s was not determined by the free market. Notoriously under Reagan, government deficits, especially to finance military spending, were the driving force behind the U.S. expansion. In Britain, North Sea oil was a windfall for Thatcher, increasing exports, raising the value of the pound sterling and thus restraining inflationary pressures. British exports also benefited from Reagan's deficit spending, which by putting more money in the pockets of Americans eager for imports, effectively exported demand to Europe. Yet neither Reagan nor Thatcher would have escaped presiding over financial collapse had their governments, in violation of free-market tenets, not intervened dramatically during the 1987 stock market crash or, currently in the United States, during the savings and loan crisis.

The most proclaimed achievements of these economies have been the victory over inflation, so conspicuous a feature of the 1970s and early 1980s, and the gains in manufacturing productivity. In both countries, antilabor, procapitalist 'free-market' policies did play a significant role here, but the fall in oil prices in the 1980s—a matter about which not only Saddam Hussein but also a number of well-placed Texas oilmen had become exercised—also contributed significantly to the decline in inflation. Another advance touted widely by free-marketeers is the growth of national income during the Reagan/Thatcher 1980s. In fact, even the 'stagflationist' 1970s produced better average growth performances for both countries. In Britain growth averaged 2.5 per cent for the 1970s and 2.2 per cent for the 1980s. The comparable U.S. figures are 2.8 per cent for the 1970s and 2.7 per cent for the 1980s. Moreover, whatever income gains that were attained in the 1980s were very unevenly distributed. In both countries, incomes for the top 1 per cent grew by exactly the same amount, 73 per cent, in the 1980s. The rich were nourished by real estate investments and the dividends, interest and capital gains associated with the speculative boom in the financial markets. For the lower 80 per cent of households, which did not speculate in real estate and financial markets, income increases were slow or nonexistent—the consequence of falling wages and rising taxes in the United States, Reaganite tax cuts having benefited only the well-off; high unemployment, especially in Britain; cuts in social services. Most severely wounded in this High Noon of the free market were the bottom 20 per cent, many of whom were plunged into economic ruin. In America some 2 million people are homeless. The number has been estimated to be the same in Britain, equal to 5 per cent of the adult population.

Even the gains of the upper classes, tied as they were to debt and speculation, are unraveling. The Milkens, Boeskys, Trumps and Keatings, and their counterparts in Britain—the entrepreneurs on whose unshackled creative energies free-market policies are supposed to depend—face retrenchment, bankruptcy, even prison.

As is now clear in the United States, the fallout from the crumbling credit structure is not limited to those who benefited from its growth. The \$500 billion price tag for the collapse and bailout of the savings and loan industry—amounting to \$4,000–\$5,000 per household over the next forty years—may be only the forward edge of the avalanche.

Bank failures have also risen exponentially. From 1950 to 1981 an average of six banks failed each year, with the worst year seeing seventeen closures. In 1982 forty-two banks collapsed, and between 1985 and 1990 the failure rate ranged between 120 and 206 banks. Similarly, the number of 'problem banks' has increased, to the point where the F.D.I.C. considers over 10 per cent of all banks in serious financial difficulty. And many of the most vulnerable institutions are also the biggest. Even Citicorp—titan of international finance—now carries on its preferred stock a 'speculative grade' rating from Moody's equivalent to one assigned junk bonds.

The speculative frenzy yields parallel dismal figures: \$1.3 trillion spent on mergers and buyouts over the 1980s, equal to roughly one-third the amount spent for new productive plant and equipment over the same period; about \$13 billion spent just arranging these deals, forty-five times the government's annual outlay for worker health and safety. And because buyouts were financed mostly through debt, corporations now devote more than 60 per cent of their pretax profits to interest payments, nearly double the burden carried in the 1970s.

The costs of such financial excess will deepen as the recession proceeds. With sales and profits falling, firms are even less capable of meeting their unprecedented interest obligations. Banks are therefore less willing to bear the risks of new lending, and with credit tight, investment, employment and wages will continue to fall, and bankruptcies to rise. It may well be that deficit-financed war spending, the old-fashioned solution to economic crisis, will steer the world economy away from the precipice. Any such success for the big-deficit strategy will only confirm how dependent on big government the Reagan/Bush and the Thatcher/Major economies remain, free-market genuflections notwithstanding. Still, unless the recession is followed by a basic restructuring of financial markets, the advanced economies will return to the same pattern of debt dependency and speculative excess that brought the recession in the first place.

#### UTOPIA AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

Even without these contradictions, the U.S. and British economies are clearly too advanced to serve as models for the world's new free-market experiments, though they retain their symbolic allure. Chile, by contrast, looks very much like a plausible model, and indeed is regularly hailed as such in both Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Chile's devotion to free-market economics has by now achieved legendary status. In 1973, even as bodies were still floating in the

Mapocho River, which runs through Santiago, Gen. Augusto Pinochet appointed his first team of free-market economists: the famous 'Chicago boys,' disciples of Milton Friedman. Their program was only a more severe version of the standard I.M.F. shock therapy so common today. The first task was to force wages sharply downward by destroying unions, eliminating wage indexing and freeing prices. Thus, from 1972-74, real wages fell by 42 per cent. The second goal was to open the economy to foreign trade and investment by slashing tariffs and other trade barriers and by eliminating regulations affecting direct foreign investment. Third came the attack on the public sector, as state spending was cut and state enterprises sold. The government simultaneously increased its economic influence by taking the role of enforcer, crushing resistance to its economic strategy, such activity in concrete terms meaning the torture and murder of labor organizers.

The first decade of this program, lasting through 1983, was catastrophic despite generous support from foreign, and especially U.S., capital. Real wages continued to decline, unemployment rose and mass living standards fell sharply. Income distribution became significantly more unequal. Exports did increase over this period, mainly because severe wage reductions and exchange-rate devaluations lowered the prices of Chilean goods. But imports rose even more, as local production declined. Import prices, moreover, were very low because of the Chicago boys' decision to maintain an overvalued national currency. As the wealthy captured an increasing share of national income, their demand for luxury imports at bargain prices grew too. The rise in imports led to a balance of payments crisis, which in turn contributed to the debt crisis of the early 1980s.

So Chile's position as the standard-bearer of free-market achievement rests entirely on its performance since 1983. National income has risen for six straight years, at an average annual rate of 6 per cent. Unemployment has also fallen steadily, from more than 14 per cent in 1983 to less than 7 per cent by 1990. Inflation averaged 18.3 per cent from 1983 to 1989, which is high in absolute terms but negligible by the hyperinflation standards of other Latin countries. Also unlike other Latin economies, Chile has been able to reduce the burden of foreign debt, from 143 per cent of G.N.P. in 1985 to 78 per cent in 1989. It has also diversified exports beyond its traditional staple of copper to include lumber, fresh fruit and fish.

But this record presents only a partial picture. While overall growth since the 1983 slump has been good, it began from the subterranean level induced by the first decade of Pinochet's repression and free-market policies. Thus, even with the sustained economic expansion, it was not until 1988 that per capita G.N.P. exceeded its level in 1980, or in 1972, the last full year of Salvador Allende's socialist government.

The average real wage follows a similar pattern. The 1989 real wage was only slightly above that of 1980 and substantially below what it had been in the mid-1970s. The minimum wage has failed to maintain even that degree of stability, falling sharply in the 1980s. As of 1987, it was 31 per cent below that of 1978. This divergence between the average and minimum wage patterns highlights the inequity of income distribution in Chile over the 1980s. Economic miracles aside, poverty, hunger and homelessness have not declined. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article reports that about 1 million people, 8 per cent of the country's population, are now homeless, and as of 1989 the Catholic Church found that 46 per cent of children under 10 were malnourished. More generally, it is extremely difficult to obtain a reliable picture of social reality under Pinochet, since the government redefined many of the most basic statistical measures of well-being, including such indicators as poverty, malnutrition, unemployment and consumer prices. For example, because it gauged poverty on the basis of durable goods rather than income, it would not count among the poor a family that owned a television, refrigerator, etc. but could not afford a loaf of bread every day.

Chile's rulers have been well aware that mass living standards have failed to rise from the depths of the early 1980s. Indeed, maintaining abysmal wages was a matter of policy, regarded as the key to the country's success in the new export industries. In the Concepcion region, an area of heavy lumber production, an economist with the local Chamber of Commerce reported in 1988 that more than 65 per cent of the workers receive less than the \$140 monthly salary considered necessary for basic family needs.

But even given these fiercely antilabor policies, there is another factor, one having nothing to do with free markets, that has been the primary determinant of Chile's export boom and, more generally, its economic success since the early 1980s: the rise of copper prices. The price of copper on the wholesale international market more than doubled from 1984 to 1989. As a consequence, Chile has enjoyed unprecedented trade surpluses. For 1988, the surplus was \$2.2 billion; prior to 1986, it had never exceeded \$1 billion.

Chile's ability to reduce its foreign debt burden since 1983 is largely a result of the country's trade surplus. But also of great importance have been its debt-equity swap agreements, whereby a foreign creditor assumes ownership of a public enterprise in exchange for writing off an equivalent share of the government's debt. Here, however, the fine print is crucial: Until 1990, investors were not permitted to repatriate profits from debt-equity investments in Chile, allowing the government to garner the benefits of these swaps without suffering their most immediate effects. Now that profit repatriations have begun, there will be a drain on Chile's still favorable international balances. The

full picture of Chile's post-1983 turnaround, therefore, is decidedly unmiraculous.

#### POST-FORDISTS AND THEIR HOT-AIR FACTORY

The adoption of free-market, open-border policies by governments throughout the world coincides with probably the single most important trend in the world economy today: the increased integration of national economies in trade, finance and investment. To some degree the internationalization of capital is inevitable given that new technologies in communications and transportation allow products, ideas and people to traverse the globe at an unprecedented rate. But the driving force, certainly with respect to production if less so in trade and finance, has been the stagnation of corporate profits in the advanced capitalist economies since the early 1970s. The result: widescale corporate restructuring to cut costs. And the swiftest and most assured method of cutting costs is to lower wages and taxes, hence the increasing mobility of capital, placing workers and governments throughout the world in internecine competition to attract private investment.

Many on the left have argued that there are natural limits to capital's mobility—that firms must always place a high premium on proximity to their equipment producers, repair technicians, suppliers of inventory and spare parts, and major markets; and that high-tech production requires skilled workers who can be found in sufficient supply only in advanced countries. Indeed, by pushing the logic of this position, some have concluded that gains in high technology will lead to the demise of 'Fordism'—the large-scale, mass-production corporate form—and its displacement by a 'post-Fordist' model in which highly skilled, well-educated workers can be spread among small-scale, clean-producing and relatively autonomous high-tech cottage industries. In other words, in the post-Fordist world, technology itself could bring an end to alienating work, the goal for which socialists have traditionally fought but never attained.

The flaw in this reasoning was recently demonstrated by the labour economist Harley Shaiken, who examined the operations of two engine-assembly plants of a major, unnamed U.S. auto maker: one in the United States and one in Mexico. Only the newer of the two plants, in Mexico, utilized cutting-edge production technologies. Yet it did not rely on experienced workers with sophisticated training. Rather, almost all of the workers in the Mexican plant were in their early 20s, recent graduates of a local vocational school. Nevertheless, the plant operated spectacularly, achieving, according to Shaiken, 'comparable machine efficiency, labour productivity and quality to the U.S. plant within its first two and one-half years of operation.' At the same time, wage costs were less than 10 per cent of what they were at the U.S. plant. As Shaiken recognizes, one cannot thus generalize that

multinationals are essentially free to move anywhere with any set of production technologies, regardless of local conditions. The point is that the most advanced technological operations *can* be successfully operated by a minimally trained, inexperienced and low-paid work force. And if this can be accomplished in one place, it surely can be repeated elsewhere. Just in the past month Ford announced it would invest \$700 million to expand an engine-assembly plant in northern Mexico; meanwhile it has been retrenching operations and selling assets in the United States.

The opening of national economics to trade and investment via free-market policies will only accentuate capital's clout in confrontations with labor and government. Thus, as governments throughout the world continue to clamor for free-market capitalism, pressure will mount for more wage concessions, less unionization, more austerity and less government regulation of business—i.e., an increasing surrender to the dictates of the capitalist class. The consequences will be spelled out in replications of the Chilean model or worse: desperation of the many, enrichment of the few.

#### SHINING PATHS

Alternatives to this bleak prospect can come only from the imagination and assertion of renewed left movements around the world. The left needs, at a minimum, to be confident in its fundamental economic positions. In plain terms this means it must not be afraid to be socialist, to counter free-market celebration and to defend economic planning and an activist state as a necessary brake on the assertions of capital.

The reasoning behind such positions is straightforward. First, an export-led and multinational-led investment strategy cannot work for everyone. It is logically impossible for all countries to run trade surpluses, since the surpluses of some countries must be exactly balanced by deficits in others. Similarly, an investment inflow to some countries will be exactly matched by an outflow—a 'capital flight'—from others. Thus, even on its own terms, the model will have to fail in at least as many countries as it succeeds. This underscores the destructive downward spiral in which countries compete for multinational investment by pushing wages and taxes as low as possible. Any alternative to the export-led open economy, wherever it may be pursued, will require active state intervention. One strategy is to strengthen local markets for domestically produced goods by increasing wages and reducing income inequality—a variation on some of the features of the populist import substitution strategy. However, any effort to raise wages significantly without concurrently increasing productivity in domestic industry will encourage hyperinflation, as occurred in Peru under the government of Alan Garcia. Thus state planning becomes necessary to coordinate all the activities that can raise both productivity and wages: investment in industrial plant and

equipment; the improvement of infrastructure and marketing arrangements; and, especially over the long term, the raising of education, health and housing standards so that people's lives can become more productive, as well as more secure and perhaps enjoyable.

Planning of this sort does not imply the eradication of markets or the suppression of democracy. Quite the opposite. In the right context, markets are the most efficient, indeed the only effective tools for establishing some prices and transmitting some information as well as rewarding people fairly for differences in ability and effort. The experience in the socialist countries has made clear that government planners should not squander their energy on inevitably ineffective efforts at controlling the production and marketing of soap, fresh fruit or blue jeans.

However, the planning system does need to unshackle from the market's grasp the functions that historical experience shows it performs badly—the setting of an economy's overall development strategy, the guarantee of a minimum level of economic security, the generation of a fair distribution of income, wealth and economic power, the control over the destructive side effects of profit-seeking activity in the workplace, the environment and elsewhere. The challenge, as Diane Elson has written in *New Left Review*, is to strike a balance by utilizing markets extensively but in a framework in which the markets themselves are socialized. As Elson has discussed, such 'socialization of the market' would entail, at a minimum, the following:

*Social control of investment.* Investment decisions are the primary determinant of an economy's overall development trajectory. The consequences of relying almost entirely on profit incentives in guiding investment activity are evident now in the United States and Britain, where for a decade the obsessive and debt-dependent drive for short-term gain has wasted these economies' financial and entrepreneurial resources. Through the public allocation of credit, public ownership of key firms and industries or other mechanisms, public institutions must at least set a framework to channel the energies of private profit-seeking. All governments already participate in investment decisions to some extent, but their customary role is mainly to act as public agents of private capital. The goal of democratic investment planning would be to represent the popular will as against the drive for profitability, especially in the realm of large-scale investment decisions. In other words, the commanding heights of the economy must be governed democratically, not through the dictatorship of private capital—and it goes without saying that democratization of the economic process has to be accompanied by democratization of the political process.

*Socialize the labor market.* Labor markets cannot constitute a fair voluntary exchange as long as capitalists control the means of livelihood and workers must sell their labour to subsist. A government's commitment to meeting people's basic needs in health, education and



housing reduces workers' insecurity and increases their productivity, thereby strengthening their relative position in the labor market. But workers must rely on their own united efforts to attain even this minimum degree of labor market leverage as well as to push beyond, toward higher living standards, more security and better working conditions. Unionism is in eclipse in Western countries and under attack virtually everywhere. Union strength will continue to erode as long as multinational firms are increasingly able to pit workers in one region or country against those in others. Thus, in the contemporary world more than ever, Marx's call for workers of the world to unite is no mere slogan; it is practical necessity.

*Socialize information.* Marx wrote that capitalism 'fetishizes' commodities—meaning that in market arrangements the social conditions under which commodities are produced are obscured as consumers attach interest only to the commodities themselves and their price. As Elson stresses, a socialized market would require democratic institutions to lift the market's informational shroud: to disseminate systematically information about the processes that shape our lives and environment and that produce and distribute commodities. People who eat Perdue chickens, for example, not only should know the chicken's price; they should know that the price reflects Perdue's antilabor practices—a high proportion of workers receiving minimum wages, no benefits and suffering from repetitive-motion illnesses due to speedups—as well as brutishness toward animals. Similarly, corporations' lying campaigns portraying their ecological commitment can be opposed successfully only through increased public consciousness of the effects of how we produce and consume.

To the extent that capitalists can suppress this sort of information, they can manipulate our decision making as consumers, gutting the idea, so appreciated by free-market economists, of 'consumer sovereignty.' In the context of a vibrant left movement, access to heretofore hidden information can be a powerful tool for restraining the market's destructive tendencies. It will be central, for example, in furthering a coalition between labor organizers and environmentalists, since such a coalition will depend on the ability to map environmental strategies that do not simultaneously diminish workers' already eroding rights and living standards.

Considered in themselves, the ideas of socializing investment, the labor market and information are hardly earth shattering. All have been practiced with varying degrees of commitment and success in virtually every country. In a capitalist context, Japan and South Korea have become economic icons through their governments' strong involvement in major investment decisions. The boycott and sanctions movement against apartheid shows what an informed and aroused citizenry can effect; so, for that matter, does the dramatic change in attitudes toward smoking. The conditions enjoyed by workers in Sweden

demonstrate what a highly organized and persistent labor movement can win.

The necessary fusion of labor and environmental struggles points to a deeper truth. The essence of the socialist challenge, as Andre Gorz writes, is 'the striving after a society in which the rationality of the maximization of productivity and profit is locked into a total social framework in such a way that it is subordinated to non-quantifiable values and goals, where economically rational labor no longer plays the principal role in the life of society or of the individual.' Hence a left-labor movement today in strategic coalitions can seize the time only if it leads the debate on the social and political implications of new and old technologies and how they affect the natural, that is to say, social environment.

Only socialism can challenge the capitalist rationality of hunger amid opulence and growth via natural destruction. Socialism can also confront the emergent capitalist rationality of casualized labour, half-time labour, semi-employed labour, and translate this into a social opportunity: less-alienating, productive jobs and a shorter working day. Capitalism can define itself only within the parameters of market rationality, whether in the 'industries' of work or leisure. Socialism puts economic rationality at the service of individual and social autonomy.

It is in pursuit of this autonomy that economic planning and an activist state should be seen as our indispensable tools: tools for defending and broadening democracy, for raising mass living standards rather than acquiescing in the imposition of mass austerity, for protecting ourselves against the brutalities of an unfettered free market and for recapturing socialism's great life-affirming vision.

## *Employment in India's Organised Sector\*\**

Historically the process of economic growth of countries, sustained over a significant time horizon, has coincided with a perceptible shift in the occupational structure of labour force. One of the forms which it takes is a shift in the work force away from the informal to the formal sector.

However, during the initial phases of development, the increase in the share of the non-agricultural sector in the GDP of the country is much faster than the increase in the share of the non-agricultural sector in total employment. Indeed, in the Indian case, the proportionate shift of workers out of agriculture did not take place for many years after the decline in the share of agriculture in GDP had gotten well underway. This lag tends to be large when the country undergoing the process of development is starting from a very low non-agricultural base. In short, a lag between the increase in the contribution of the non-agricultural sector to GDP and the increase in the share of employment in non-agriculture is likely in the case of developing countries during the early phase of their development. However the increase in the share of the non-agricultural sector in the GDP of the country is not itself sufficient to ensure a perceptible change in the occupational structure in favour of the non-agriculture even with a long time lag. The nature of change in product and financial markets, government policies, the choice of technique in various sectors and so on are important forces that underlie and sustain such an occupational shift.

In the case of developing countries like India it can be argued that the problems of unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment in agriculture are much more acute than the problems of

---

\* Research scholar, Centre for Economic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

\*\* The author deeply indebted to Prof. Shella Bhalla for her constant help and suggestions during various stages of this article.

various types of unemployment within the formal sector. But such a view is misleading to the extent that these developments are not separable. To a great extent, unemployment within the organised sector is the spill-over effect of unemployment in the unorganised sector. On the other hand, it is the failure of the organised sector to absorb labour at a significantly increased rate which is one major reason for the persistence of various types of unemployment within the organised sector.

This paper seeks to analyse the structure of employment within the organised sector during the period 1977 to 1988. Attempt has been made to explore the forces which influenced the emergence of such an employment structure and to contrast the present structure with that existed before this period.

#### DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The definition of 'organised sector' in India has changed over time. Before March 1965, it included non-agricultural establishments in the private sector employing 25 or more workers and all establishments in the public sector. As of March 1965, the definition has been extended to include private establishments employing 10-24 workers also, on a voluntary reporting basis.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1980s the 'voluntary basis' clause applied to establishments with 10-24 workers in the private sector was dropped.<sup>2</sup> Thus the organised sector now includes a very significant part of the secondary and tertiary sectors. In this paper, the terms 'organised sector' and 'formal sector' have been used interchangeably. The same is true for the terms 'informal' and 'unorganised sector'. According to the factory Act, 1948, the factory sector consists of establishments using power and employing 10 or more workers each on any day of the preceding 12 months. By a special act from 1966, bidi manufacturing units have been included in the factory sector. Another result of the 1966 act is that the factory sector now also includes establishments employing 20 or more workers each but not using power. Hence the factory sector can be treated as a proxy for the organised sector. The non-agricultural sector, in addition to the coverage of the organised sector, includes non-agricultural establishments employing less than 10 workers. That is, in addition to the members of the organised sector, the non-agricultural segment includes a major part of the household industries, a significant part of retail trade, of private construction and so on. There has been a further change in the industrial classification of the organised sector from 1975.<sup>3</sup> As a result, there is a problem in comparing data on organised sector employment before 1975 with the data after 1975.

The concept of 'worker' in the 1961, 1971 and 1981 censuses has also changed.<sup>4</sup> Thus, there are difficulties in comparing the employment

figures for different periods. However, this problem of changes in the definition of workers in various censuses is not as acute in the organised sector as it is in the case of the unorganised sector. Still, different analyses show that 1971 census figures are underestimations with respect to 1981 census figures. In analysing the dynamics of the structure of employment in the organised sector these changes in definitions and classifications over time need to be kept in mind.

#### EMPLOYMENT IN THE ORGANISED SECTOR: SOME ISSUES

Recent data reveal a number of interesting features about the employment structure in the organised sector. The rate of growth of employment in the sector 1977-78 to 1982-83 improved over the performance in 1966-67 to 1976-77. Table-1 shows that the respective growth rates were 2.61 per-cent per annum and 2.38 per-cent per annum. However, between 1983-84 and 1987-88 the figure has declined sharply to 1.31 percent per annum. Within the organised sector the growth of employment in the public sector is higher than it is in the private sector during the decade ending in 1987-88. In manufacturing, both the private and public sectors, performed worse than the organised sector as a whole. The rate of growth of employment in private organised sector is -0.42 percent per annum during 1983-84 to 1987-88. The corresponding figure for private manufacturing is -1.13 percent per annum. The rate of growth of employment in public manufacturing sector though positive is as low as 0.54 percent per annum during the same period.<sup>7</sup>

In the manufacturing sector nevertheless in 1987-88 the private manufacturing enterprises provided 43.95 lakh jobs which is about 65 percent of total employment in the sector. A substantially negative rate of growth of employment in the private sector enterprises of the segment during 1983-84 to 1987-88 along with a very low growth rate of employment in public sector manufacturing enterprises is an alarming sign. Historically the process of development has been associated with an increase in the growth of employment in manufacturing. In India, job opportunities in the manufacturing sector have in fact declined from 62.9 lakhs to 62.62 lakhs over the period (Table 1). On the basis of industrial classification of organised sector, it can be observed that between March 1976 and March 1988 the rates of growth of employment in all class is much worse than the performance during 1961-62 except for mining and quarrying. Four out of eight industrial classes namely (a) mining and quarrying, (b) manufacturing, (c) electricity, water and gas supply, and (d) community, social and personal service have shown a decline in the rate of growth of employment between 1976-88 compared to the performance during 1966-76. The only category which shows a high growth rate of employment sustained over the period

between 1961 to 1988 is trade, commerce and banking. The relevant figures have been presented in Table 2.

The elasticity of employment<sup>8</sup> in the organised sector during 1977-78 to 1987-88 was in almost years less than the corresponding figures during 1966-67 to 1976-77. But during the former period except for two years (1979-80 and 1982-83) the rate of growth of GDP was always higher than the average rate of growth of GDP during 1966-67 to 1976-77. This implies that the growth rate of employment has failed to keep pace with the increase in rate of growth of GDP during the period 1977-78 to 1987-88. In short, the employment generating capacity of incremental GDP has declined to a great extent during the period of analysis and this is much more marked during 1983-84 to 1987-88 (Table 3).

One consequence of differential rates of growth of various components of GDP in India is that the share of primary sector in general and of agriculture in particular in GDP has been continuously decreasing since independence, whereas that of the secondary and tertiary sectors were continuously increasing. The share of manufacturing sector recorded a slow rate of growth during 1966 to 1979 and after that has increased substantially. From Table 4 it can be seen that the relative share of tertiary sector is typically greater than that of secondary sector since independence and higher than the primary sector since 1974-79. The share of commodity producing sector in GDP of the country has fallen considerably over all the seven plan periods,<sup>9</sup> whereas the share of infrastructure, public administration and defence has increased substantially (Table 4).

After independence the proportion of the labour force in agriculture has increased till 1970-71 (Table 5) subsequently it has started declining *albiet* slowly, implying the labour is getting shifted from low productivity agriculture to high productivity non-agriculture. The gap between productivity in non agriculture has increased over time.

The all India capital-labour ratio in the organised sector has increased at a compound growth rate of about 10 percent per annum during 1970-71 to 1983-84. For the sub period 1977-78 to 1983-84 the figure is about 14 percent per annum (Table 6). Except for Assam and Orissa the continuous increase in the capital labour ratio during the whole period is a characteristic of all other states.

During the early seventies the all India capital output ratio fell considerably and subsequently it rose continuously, but by 1983-84 the figure is still below the 1970-71 level (Table 7). For individual states, however, the movement of capital-output ratio is diverse but those states which have a well developed organised sector have experienced a pattern of change in the capital-output ratios which are similar to the all India profile.

From the observations on elasticities of employment, capital-output and capital labour ratios, it appears that production in the organised sector is becoming more and more capital intensive in recent times. Over the period of discussion the components of tertiary sector i.e. banking, insurance, real estate, ownership of dwellings, business services etc. have shown a rapid increase in their share in GDP. But these segments have also shown much better employment elasticities than the manufacturing sector during 1977-78 to 1987-88. Thus, the increase in the weights of public administration, defence, various services and so on in terms of share of GDP has in fact served to offset the tendency for the organised sector to become more capital intensive. It is the poor employment performance of the growth of manufacturing, construction, electricity, water and gas supply and transport, communication and trade which has reduced the overall employment generating capacity of increment to GDP in the organised sector.

It is perhaps possible to say that it is not the shifts in the weights in terms of share of GDP of various industrial classes of the organised sector but rather the change in technology within each industrial class which has given a more and more capital intensive character to the organised sector. Papola's results(1988) are in conformity with this analysis.

One can see that in the case of India during the period 1970-71 to 1983-84 the average productivity of capital in the organised sector increased considerably from 1970-71 to 1973-74; after that it has decreased (Table 8). The situation in the states where the development of organised sector is considerable is similar to the all India experience. In the case of labour productivity at all India level it has increased continuously at a compound rate of 11 percent per annum over the entire period from 1970-71 to 1983-84. Except for Bihar, all other states have shown the same directional movement during the period.

#### CONCLUSION

During the 70s for the first time in this century the agricultural population started moving towards non-agriculture. But given the scenario of the organised sector during 1977-88 the hope for a much better future appears illusory. A relatively high rate of growth of GDP, a low rate of growth of employment and a corresponding low elasticity of employment implies that the continuation of this process of expansion of the organised sector will necessitate a very high rate of growth of GDP in future if the incipient shift of workers out of agriculture is to be accelerated or even maintained. Given the present constraints on mobilisation of resources in India internally or externally, it is not very realistic to anticipate that such high rates of growth in the organised sector can be sustained in future.

## NOTES

1. *Economic Survey*, 1972-73, Government of India, Page 127.
2. *Economic Survey*, 1982, 83, Government of India, Page 122.
3. Bidi and Cigar workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966.
4. This has come in to effect after March 1965.
5. Before 1st April 1975 it was based on 'Standard Industrial Classification', 1960, and from 1st April 1975 it is based on the 'National Industrial classification', 1970 *Economic Survey* 1988-89 Page S46.
6. In 1961 census, 'a person was deemed a worker if he had worked for the major part of the working season or for the last fortnight preceding the date of enumeration'. The 1971 census adopted the concept of main activity, 'the activity in which the person engages himself monthly'. 1981 census defined, 'a worker was one who worked major part of the year, presumably more than 6 months, others who worked less would then be classified as marginal workers'.
7. The employment growth rate in manufacturing during the period of Second Five Year Plan was 3.5 percent per annum, during Third Five Year Plan it was merely 4.3 percent per annum whereas during 1965-77 it was just 2 percent per annum.
8. Measured by the ratio of growth rate of employment by growth rate of GDP.
9. Including the annual plan periods also.

## REFERENCES

- Acharya, S. and Papanck, G.F. (1988) : 'Agricultural Wages and Rural Poverty in India', Discussion papers, Asian Centre, Boston University, Boston.
- Bhalla, S. (1989) : 'Employment in Indian Agriculture: Retrospect and Prospect', *Social Scientist*, May-June, numbers 192-193.
- Bhagwati, J. and Chakravarty, S (1969) : 'Contribution to Indian Economic Analysis' : A Survey, *American Economic Review*, Supplement (September)
- Bharadwaj, R. and Bhagwati, J. (1969) : 'Human Capital and Patterns of Foreign Trade : The Indian Case', in P.N. Mathur and R. Bharadwaj (eds), *Economic Analysis in Input Output Framework*, Vol. 2 (Input Output Association, Poona)
- Data Roychoudhury, U. (1983) : 'The behaviour of Capital Labour Ratios in Indian Economy', in A. Robinson, P.R. Brahmananda and L.K. Deshpande (eds) *Employment policy in a Developing Country A case-study of India*, Vol. 1 International Economic Association, Published by the MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Deshpande, L.K. (1983) : 'Urban Labour Market Problems and Policies', in same as Datta Roychoudhury, U.
- Mohan, R. and Thottau, p. (1988) : 'The Regional Spread of Urbanisation, Industrialisation and Urban Poverty', Planning Commission, GOI, Development Policy Division, October.
- Nagaraj, R. (1990) : 'Industrial Growth Further Evidence and towards an Explanation and issues', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 13
- Papola, T.S. (1988) : 'Restructuring the Indian Industry : Implications for Employment and Industrial Relations, a study prepared for ILO-ARTEP, New Delhi.
- Ramamohan Roy, T.V.S. (1983) : 'Industrialisation and Employment', in same as Datta Roychoudhury, U.
- Sen, A. (1988) : 'A note on Employment and Living Standard in Unorganised Sector', *Social Scientist*.
- Shetty, S.L. (1978) : 'Structural Retrogression in Indian Economy Since the Mid Sixties', *Economic and Political Weekly*, February.
- (1988) : 'Industrial Growth and Structure (As Seen Through Annual Survey of Industries)', *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 2.



Table 1  
Growth of Employment in the Organised Sector in India  
(in lakhs)

Year (April-March)	All Organised Sector				Manufacturing Sector							
	Public Sector		Private Sector		All		Public Sector		Private Sector		All	
	No!	% Change	No	% Change	No	% Change	No	% Change	No	% Change	No	% Change
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
<hr/>												
Simple growth rate 1965-66 over 1960-61 (p.a.)		5.88		6.28		6.03		12.79		6.05		7.11
<hr/>												
Simple growth rate over 1966-67		3.64		0.28		2.38		5.9		1.07		1.96
<hr/>												
1976-77 (p.a.)												
1977-78	142	3.2	70.4	2.6	212.4	3	13.6	10.5	43.21	3.8	56.8	5.3
1978-79	146.8	3.4	72.1	2.3	218.8	3	14.2	4.5	44.3	2.6	58.5	3.1
1979-80	150.8	2.7	72.3	0.3	223.1	1.9	14.7	2.1	44.2	-0.4	58.6	0.2
1980-81	154.8	2.7	74	2.3	228.8	2.6	15	3.9	45.5	2.9	60.5	3.1
1981-82	159.5	2.9	75.5	2.1	234.9	2.7	15.9	6	46.6	2.6	62.5	3.4
1982-83	164.6	3.2	75.5	0.1	240.9	2.5	16.3	2.6	46.6	-0.1	62.9	0.6

Table 1 Contd. ...



Table 2  
Industry-wise Distribution of Employment in the Organised Sector (Public and Private)

	March 1961	March 1966	Variation (3)-(2)	% change between 1960-1961 (Av. p.a.)	March 1976	Variation (6)-(3)	% change between 1976 & 1966 (Av. p.a.)	March 1988	Variation (9)-(6)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Total employ- ment of which	120.9	161.9	41	6.8	201.7	39.7	2.5	257.1	55.5
(i) Agricul- ture, hunt- ing etc.	8.5	11.3	2.8	6.6	11.9	0.6	0.5	13	2.1
(ii) Mining and quarry- ing	6.8	6.7	-0.1	-0.4	8.5	1.8	2.8	10.5	2
(iii) Manu- facturing	33.9	45.3	11.4	6.7	52.7	7.4	1.6	62.6	9.9
(iv) Electricity gas, water supply etc.	2.7	3.5	0.8	6.1	5.7	2.3	6.6	8.9	3.2

Table 2 Contd. . .

	March 1961	March 1966	Variation (3)-(2)	% change between 1960-1961 (A.V. p.a.)	March 1976	Variation (6)-(3)	% change between 1976 & 1966 (A.V. p.a.)	March 1988	Variation (9)-(6)
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)									
(v) Construction	843	10.2	1.8	4.2	10.9	0.7	0.7	12.6	1.8
(vi) Trade, commerce and banking	2.5	4.9	2.3	18.2	10.2	5.3	11	27.6	17.4
(vii) Transport storage and communication	18	22.2	4.1	4.6	24.9	2.8	1.2	30.6	5.7
(viii) Community and social and personal services	40.1		58	17.9	9	76.9	18.9	3.3	100.3

Source: Economic Survey, Government of India, various issues.

Table 3  
Growth Rate of GDP Employment and Employment Elasticity in the Indian Organised Sector

Year	Agriculture, Forestry Logging, Fishing, Mining and quarrying			Manufacturing, construction Electricity gas and water supply			Transport, Communication and Trade		
	GDP	EMPT	ELAS	GDP	EMPT	ELAS	GDP	EMPT	ELAS
1961-62—1965-66	-0.4	2.9	-7.25	3.4	4.74	1.39	5.88	3.77	0.63
1966-67—1976-77	3	1.7	0.57	4.2	1.36	0.32	4.5	0.42	0.09
1977-78	9.8	1.5	0.15	6.9	4.18	0.61	6.8	1.67	0.25
1978-79	2.3	0.9	0.37	9.2	3.17	0.34	8.2	3.61	0.44
1979-80	-12.3	3.1	-0.25	-3.3	0.87	-0.26	-0.9	1.87	-2.08
1980-81	12.5	2.49	0.2	2.7	2.86	1.06	5.6	1.8	0.32
1981-82	6	0	0	7.6	2.99	0.39	6.1	2.1	0.34
1982-83	-1	2.5	-2.5	4.3	0.8	0.18	5.3	1.43	0.27
1983-84	10.3	0.89	0.09	9.5	-1.08	-0.11	5.6	1.24	0.22
1984-85	0.1	1.84	18.4	6.3	0.6	0.1	5.7	1.1	0.19
1985-86	0.5	1.36	2.72	7.1	1.69	0.24	8.3	1.03	0.12
1986-87	-1	0.53	-0.53	7.2	-1.14	-0.15	6.2	1.22	0.2
1987-88	0.7	0.37	0.53	5.6	2.04	0.36	5.1	1.46	0.29

Table 3 Contd. . .

Year	Banking Insurance, Real Estate, Owner- ship of Dwellings & Business services				Public Administration, Defence and other services				Total	
	GDP	EMPT	ELAS		GDP	EMPT	ELAS		GDP	EMPT ELAS
1961-62-1965-66	3.1	-	-		5.6	8.92	1.6		2.5	5.8 2.32
1966-67-1976-77	4.1	4	1		4.1	3.2	0.78		3.6	2.2 0.61
1977-78	4.9	5.3	1.08		2.7	0.9	0.33		7.5	2.9 0.39
1978-79	7.1	10.4	1.46		4.3	3.4	0.79		5.5	2.9 0.53
1979-80	1	5.5	5.5		7.3	2.1	0.29		-5.2	1.9 -0.37
1980-81	2.4	5	2.31		4.1	2.1	0.51		7	2.5 0.36
1981-82	4.7	7.36	1.57		3.5	2.6	0.74		6	2.6 0.43
1982-83	7.6	5.6	0.74		7.8	3.1	0.4		3	2.1 0.7
1983-84	5.6	4.3	0.81		3.6	2	0.56		8.1	0.9 0.11
1984-85	6.6	6.2	0.94		7.3	1.7	0.23		3.9	1.5 0.38
1985-86	7.2	1.8	0.25		7.5	2.3	0.31		4.9	1.9 0.39
1986-87	7.4	4.7	0.64		7.9	2.4	0.3		4.2	1.3 0.31
1987-88	5.8	3.6	0.62		8	1.4	0.78		4.1	1.3 0.32

Note: Employment elasticity is measured by dividing the growth rate of employment by the growth rate of GDP.

Source: *Economic Survey*, Government of India, various issues.

Table 4  
Sectoral Composition of GDP: New Series (Base 1980-81-100)

Sector	I PLAN 1951-56	II PLAN 1956-61	III PLAN 1961-66	ANUAL PLANS 1966-69	IV PLAN 1969-74	V PLAN 1974-79	VI PLAN 1980-84	VII PLAN 1985-88
1. Primary sector	54.9	51.8	46.6	43.6	42.9	40.6	36.8	32.11
1.1 Agriculture	49	46.5	41.6	38.4	38.1	36.3	34	29.8
2. Secondary sector	15.7	17.9	21.2	22.5	23	23.8	25	27.7
2.1 Manufacturing	11.9	13.5	15.8	16	16.7	17.5	18.6	21.1
3. Tertiary sector	29.4	30.3	32.2	33.9	34.1	35.6	38.2	40.2
4. Commodity producing sector	66.8	65.3	62.4	59.6	59.6	58.4	55.4	53.2
5. Essential Infrastructure	23.8	25.2	27.4	29.2	29.1	30.6	32.4	33.6
6. Other services	7.2	7	7.2	7.6	7.3	7.1	7.4	7.8
7. Public Administration & defence	2.2	2.5	3	3.6	4	4.2	4.8	5.4
8. Total GDP (1+2+3=4+5+6+7)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Accounts Statistics, various issues, (Reproduced from *Economic and Political Weekly*, June/1990, Page-1481)

Table 5  
Per Capita Net Domestic Product in Agricultural and Non-Agricultural  
Sectors (Rs as Constant 1970-71 prices)

Year	Proportion of population in agriculture	Per Capita Net Domestic Product			Ratio of (5) to (4)
		Total	Agriculture	Non-Agriculture	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1950-51	67.5	462.486	402.133	587.834	1.46
1960-61	69.5	550.668	427.486	831.36	1.94
1970-71	69.5	626.126	426.818	1080.286	2.53
1980-81	66.5	686.75	417.349	1251.533	2.93
1984-85	65.3	764.054	430.612	1392.541	3.23

Source: National Account Statistics, various issues.

Table 6  
Capital-Labour Proportion in factory sector 1970-71—1983-84

States	1970-71	1973-74	1977-78	1983-84
A.P	14875	15075	17462	38892
Assam	20488	14215	23382	25945
Bihar	25700	26898	60791	132591
Gujarat	12125	15521	26861	58646
Haryana	214384	21937	40401	63987
J.K	24453	29292	32165	48437
Karnataka	16743	15509	23103	48975
Kerala	9617	16867	20928	49006
M.P	26143	27506	40411	110947
Maharashtra	13726	15977	24086	59932
Orissa	46322	41031	43028	91327
Punjab	19192	26774	43411	74569
Rajasthan	26871	28516	47221	90571
T.N	16138	17139	20524	40730
U.P	24802	28924	33113	73230
W.B	12403	10615	14891	36527
India	17299	18377	27381	60884

Note: Capital-Labour ratio is obtained by dividing the fixed capital employed by the total labour employed in the same year.

Source:-Annual Survey of Industries, various issues.



Table 7  
Capital-Output Ratio In The Factory Sector, 1970-71—1983-84

States	1970-71	1973-74	1977-78	1983-84
India	2.57	1.74	2.03	2.33
A.P.	3.56	2.24	2.19	2.02
Assam	4.09	1.12	1.95	0.91
Bihar	3.46	1.93	4.37	4.23
Gujarat	2.01	1.36	1.92	2.21
Haryana	2.44	2.32	1.17	2.49
J & K	50.02	6.59	5.66	2.88
Karnataka	2.00	1.70	1.37	1.86
Kerala	1.80	2.38	2.20	1.81
M.P.	4.69	2.31	3.33	3.92
Maharashtra	1.46	1.12	1.24	1.63
Orissa	7.96	3.97	2.84	5.49
Punjab	3.61	3.15	3.25	3.61
Rajasthan	4.16	2.98	3.22	3.78
T.N.	2.85	1.72	1.51	1.43
U.P.	4.57	3.23	3.81	3.90
W.B.	2.12	1.21	1.30	1.82

Table 8  
Average capital productivity in the factory sector 1970-71—1983-84

States	1970-71	1973-74	1977-78	1983-84
A.P.	0.2582	0.3987	0.3857	0.4509
Assam	0.2376	0.4841	0.6020	0.7976
Bihar	0.2568	0.3098	0.1743	0.3315
Gujarat	0.5009	0.5334	0.4863	0.4952
Haryana	0.3163	0.3255	0.3949	0.5086
J & K	0.0639	0.0757	0.1105	0.2036
Karnataka	0.4369	0.5031	0.4748	0.581
Kerala	0.4694	0.3284	0.3998	0.4204
M.P.	0.2106	0.3378	0.2937	0.2467
Maharashtra	0.6137	0.6969	0.6783	0.5675
Orissa	0.1438	0.2188	0.3117	0.2374
Punjab	0.2661	0.2355	0.2488	0.2444
Rajasthan	0.2209	0.2443	0.2467	0.3047
T.N.	0.3372	0.4362	0.5554	0.5398
U.P.	0.2149	0.2329	0.2285	0.2268
W.B.	0.4039	0.6462	0.677	0.4882
India	0.3570	0.4364	0.4182	0.4135

Note: The ratios have been obtained by dividing the relevant year's value added figures by the fixed capital.

Source: Annual Survey of Industries, various issues.

Table 9  
Average labour productivity in factory sector 1970-71—1983-84

States	1970-71	1973-74	1977-78	1983-84
India	6175.18	8020.34	11451.15	25175.33
A.P	3840.57	6010.08	6734.26	17536.66
Assam	4866.90	6881.11	14075.19	20692.75
Bihar	6600.89	8333.00	10594.37	43954.72
Gujarat	6073.25	8279.42	13061.40	29538.68
Haryana	7806.36	7139.89	15954.56	32544.33
J & K	1561.85	2218.15	3554.45	9863.52
Karnataka	7316.95	7803.07	10969.66	28454.06
Kerala	4513.92	5538.20	8367.84	20591.21
M.P	5505.53	9292.24	11866.86	27369.30
Maharashtra	8424.20	11134.42	16338.49	34012.04
Orissa	6658.98	8975.73	13410.83	21681.51
Punjab	5107.70	6305.52	10801.01	18227.35
Rajasthan	5935.95	6965.40	11647.54	27593.73
T.N	5441.51	7476.17	11398.96	21985.08
U.P	5330.24	6735.80	7567.20	16609.59
W.B	5076.50	6859.66	10081.51	17834.17

## BOOK REVIEW

### *French Studies in Urban Policy*

Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Mulk Raj, eds., *French Studies in Urban Policy*, A Survey of Research, Orient Longman, 1990, Price Rs. 110 .

Critics and book reviewers, I am told on good authority, should comment on whatever they are assessing, kindly to begin with and unkindly, if need be afterwards. This is the kind and generous way that levels off the personal prejudices of the commentator. There is no doubt much sense in this advice because book publishing and book reading, in any case, have become such a fragile activities. Perhaps one ought to qualify this a bit further. Book publishing is certainly not as fragile an activity as book reading. Fragile because the time required to be spent in the preparation or absorption of printed matter seems to be snatched away from other pressing activities. Books need to be created with great care and trouble and they need to be read deeply and continuously. These are now rare occurrences amongst the middle class English reading public in our metropolitan cities. More and more and collected papers are getting published by obscure editors for institutional libraries whose purchases cover the publication costs. More and more readers confine their reading time to the waiting period between departures and arrivals. The book review, in same ways, therefore becomes an important medium to draw the attention of potential readers, however few there may be of them. To be kind and generous to a book is therefore almost a mandatory function for a reviewer, provided ofcourse that the book is atleast readable.

*French Studies in Urban Policy* is a very readable book for a specialised audience which is interested in Urbanisation and Policy. Both these aspects of our cities in India seem to be beyond anybody's control, or so it seems. Otherwise why would our metropolitan cities be hurtling along a rudderless path that will ofcourse lead to the veritable quicksands. Indeed an urban dweller might be quite surprised to read about Urban Policy which should spring from the needs of the inhabitants rather than political expediency. To read about a coherent study of policy is therefore welcome. Our urban planners could read the chapters in this book while they sit in the passenger seat during the demolition operations because they are only repeating what happened

in Europe at the turn of the century. Such a reading would be rewarding because it might help avoid the same painful process that French Planning has already been through. Indeed the book clearly demonstrates that urban planning in India is tackling the problem of rapid urbanisation with solutions that the French had already exhausted in 1910.

At the turn of the century, a fierce antagonism developed between the locally elected members and the technicians the latter levelled a strong protest against the former, concerning the urban administration laws of regulation and intervention which were supposed to guarantee decent housing facilities for all. There were signs of confrontation between two kinds of justifications one of technical competence and the other of political representation a confrontation that was heightened by the growing complication caused by increased state intervention.

Many urban planners thought these shortcomings had to be corrected and strong measures had to be imposed upon government officials who were involved in local political racketeering and were too ready to strike compromises with land owners.

The material in the book has been arranged around some sort of historical framework that takes the reader through the history of town planning from its early beginnings, through the world wars into modern times. Alas, if our fine professional planners, numbered to sterility by compromises, could only put away their voluminous files and spend a little time with this book, then surely we could be spared the torture of watching their professional experience develop stage by stage, disaster by disaster along a road that European towns have already trodden. There is, I believe, no case to be made for the argument that the Indian urbanisation process is different from any other. Studies in the history of urbanisation are replete with examples of parallel misfortunes that have befallen the hopeless European urban dwellers at the turn of the century. There is value in, therefore, considering the experience of other continents, because to arrive at new solutions to our problems we need a reflect a little more and reflex a little less. Reading a book on urban policy, be it related to French, American or any other experience, can give one time for reflection. There are no solutions in these studies. Notwithstanding the temptation of our planners to rush to solutions, we need to think about the nature of the problem. This book presents a panorama of the nature of the problem of urbanisation and the futile and successful attempts at influencing its dynamism with policy. It is not a comprehensive book, but then nor is it on fast forward. However it is an interesting contribution to the bibliography on the city.

One of the most debatable concepts that concerns the student of urbanisation is the definition of the city. There is an already accepted notion that the city is an object that needs to be looked at as a whole. Although as a mature form, the city has existed for thousands of years, its megapolis scale is a modern, post industrial phenomenon. Gone are the days when etching artists could sit on a hillock outside the city gate and capture a whole view of a city. Today it takes satellite imagery to view the parameters of a city. As a megapolis, the very basis of the city has altered since its inhabitants no longer have any control over its fate. This control has passed on to the bureaucrat whose policies (or lack of them) now guide the destiny of the inhabitants. If we regard the city-any city-as a functional object, we must consider its dual aspect. Firstly the city is a machine for survival and secondly it is an artefact which should enrich the quality of life of its inhabitants. As a machine for survival (and I use the metaphor to evoke something turning with many cogs) it attracts migration, it is controlled by economic interests and used by the powerful. As an artefact, it enables its inhabitants to enter within it, and choose a better quality of life than exists outside its boundaries. Policies are intended to control both these aspects of the city except that eventually, urban policies are essentially the weapons of control of the rich and powerful. This is brought out very well in the section of the book that deals with the challenges that the French faced after the Second World War. Thus 'expropriation' (or acquisition as we call it) is dealt with.

The expropriating authority thus assumes the role of an intermediary who mobilises land and redistributes it (or buys it by mutual consent, under the lot of expropriation) to private or non-private users. The new owners, in turn, use the land profitably in keeping with the general objectives.

Echoes of Nariman Point, Bhikaji Cama Place etc. Before reaching the end of this review, it would ofcourse be necessary to say the unkind things too. The most glaring misfortune of the book is that Mulk Raj has been identified as a co-editor as well as the author of the Foreword. Mercifully his name appears after that of Jean-Pierre Gaudin because the real howlers are in the Foreword. Sentences and an entire paragraph have been lifted out of the main text and rubbed into the Foreword text. It really makes the Foreword quite redundant and makes one wonder what contribution has been made by the Indian editor. Since the entire text of the book consists of an introduction by the French editor and a whole collection of articles culled and translated from various French Journals it is difficult to imagine about Mr. Mulk Raj's contribution. Although these Journals have been referred to, their publication dates of the original articles are ominously missing leading one to believe that some of them may not be that recent. One date reference reveals 1958 and 1970. Given the fact

that this material has been specially translated (by Vandana Kawtra and Sureet Narulla) its non availability to the English speaking readers so far one could overlook the fact that some of the articles seem to be over thirty years old.

One of the problems faced by publications such as this is that in the absence of any public debates on urban policies, the relevance of its concern is valuable to only a few people. There is no debate on open or academic urban policy in India, only hushed up discussions around file notings in municipal offices and political lobbies. The professionals are isolated and marginalised by the road hogging manipulators. Thus it is only the professional and the academic who will find this book useful. Its affordable price is, no doubt, due to the assistance of the office of the Counsellor for Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation of the French Embassy.

ROMI KHOSLA

## *International Monetary Economics*

M. June Flanders, *International Monetary Economics, 1870-1960: Between the Classical and the New Classical*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 368

Economists are frequently indicted for their self-absorption in the discipline, whereby debates, controversies and 'discoveries' increasingly take place in a self-referential world almost regardless of how the real world is behaving. More and more, the pages of major academic journals reflect this tendency to locate new insights within 'the literature' rather than any actual economy. While this is in itself a major shift from the concerns of classical political economy, it is intriguing to observe this inward-looking microscopic vision even in a study of the history of economic ideas. The present book is remarkable for this very reason: in its almost complete obsession with what various economists have said over a period of time on a particular issue, with scant regard for the economic and historical context of such discussion, it manages to present a history of literature that is ahistorical in approach and irrelevant in content. This is all the more puzzling as the issue itself is one of the most historically embedded and directly linked to 'real world' problems: that of international adjustment.

Of course, a survey of literature can serve one of a number of purposes. It can provide a quick review of various arguments so as to prevent the re-invention of analytical wheels; it can highlight differences in approach which also serve to emphasize ideological differences often concealed in jargon or other sophistication; it can serve an important pedagogic purpose in clarifying ideas and concepts. Unfortunately, Flanders, despite a detailed look at particular authors and a fairly comprehensive list of economists in the mainstream tradition, is unable to succeed on any of the above counts. Part of the problem may be the breathless and hectic pace at which she takes up her authors (in largely chronological order) which makes for dizzy reading. The rather coy style also occasionally distracts from the matters at hand.

Flanders divides her 'cast of characters' into two streams: Stream F (formal) which has to do with long run equilibrium models and includes economists such as Hume and Mill, 'late classicals' such as Taussig and

Jacob Viner, Ohlin and the Keynesians; and Stream P (policy-oriented) which includes neo-classicals such as Bagehot, those whom Flanders inexplicably describes as anti-neo-classicals such as Hayek and Hawtrey, Keynes himself, and 'crisis' writers such as Kindleberger and Bloomfield. Finally, there is the confluence stream, consisting of Metzler, Meade, Mundell. Flanders admits that her classification is idiosyncratic to say the least, but one could forgive this if it actually contributed to our understanding of these writers more than any standard classification. Further, Flanders is concerned only with economists broadly in the mainstream tradition or those who have attempted to modify it, completely ignoring the wealth of radical literature from Marx onwards.

The book is concerned with an elaboration of the positions of the various writers mentioned, on such issues as the efficacy of the Gold Standard, the role of the bank rate, the specific dynamics of adjustment, the role and importance of capital flows. Flanders seldom does more than simply summarize various arguments, often less clearly than the original writers have done themselves and rarely if ever does she link them to the international or domestic economic context of debates. Such a discussion would appeal only to those who are fascinated with what some economists have had to say to each other on these issues over a century independent of anything else, an appeal which is unlikely to extend beyond a limited tribe of practising economists.

The nature of the book is such that the author confesses in the closing chapter that 'I can draw no conclusions as such, nor can I summarize what I have written.' (page 335) However, she does raise certain issues about international capital flows, which emerge from her discussion. In particular, she asks why economists are so much more ready to assume and to promote free trade in goods and services rather than in capital, and why it is argued that capital mobility makes it difficult for countries to engage in independent monetary policy, why total capital mobility across the globe should not be freely advocated.

The answers to these questions are so obvious that it is baffling to find them posed at the end of a survey of literature. Quite simply, capital mobility necessarily includes speculative flows of hot money along with more long term investment, and being capital, allocations are inextricably tied in with current returns and the possibility of capital gains/losses. Domestic monetary policy has to be affected by these considerations when the capital account is open; the problem is that such policy is typically inadequate to control/monitor capital flows across the world today. The reason for caution in opening international capital markets is that this is one of the most highly mobile, rapid, and yet imperfect of markets in the world today.



Flanders' inability to see this basic fact which is accepted by almost all economists must stem from her almost total disregard of history or current reality.

JAYATI GHOSH  
Centre for Economic Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University,  
New Delhi.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Women's Struggle*

Aparna Basu and Bharati Ray, *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference, 1927-1990*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 206, Rs 210.

The All India Women's Conference, founded in 1927, was one of the major women's organisations which led the women's movement in the pre-independence India. It had, in course of its long history, played a vital role in mobilising and organising women from various parts of India and providing a forum to discuss and debate women's issues such as child, marriage, problems of widowhood, the age of consent at marriage and women's education. The AIWC was also instrumental in bringing about various social legislations for women, including the Hindu Code Bill.

Though at its inception it clearly demarcated itself from various political organisations and party politics, over the years there were constant debates within the organisation over the concept of politics and the role of the AIWC in the national politics. In fact, in the pre-independence period, the AIWC did ensure women's participation in the anti-colonial struggles. Its post-independence history was by and large marked by middle class inspired welfare activities and during this period it almost became an extended arm of the Congress Party.

The book under review, *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference, 1927-1990*, narrates in detail the history of and the changing nature of activities undertaken by the AIWC during its long career from 1927 to the present. Significantly, in writing this history, the authors have utilised such sources as the AIWC files, private papers of Muthulakshmi Reddy as well as some hitherto unknown women's journals. Also, they have conducted a number of interviews among women and documented new facts about women's activities in the public sphere.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter outlines the context in which the AIWC was founded in 1927. In this chapter, the authors argue that the efforts of male social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Malabari and Vidyasagar resulted in some awareness among women to organise themselves in the early twentieth century. In

addition, according to them, the formation of the Bharat Stri Maha Mandal and other social reform organisations had a definite influence in the founding of the AIWC. The role of the AIWC in social and political reform activities, including its participation in the nationalist movement, is also briefly discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter elaborates the AIWC's changing perception on women's education and its role in promoting women's education. Through a chronological ordering of events, the authors show how the emphasis of the organisation with regard to women's education has changed over the years. For instance, the book shows, in its first conference in 1927 the AIWC underscored the goal of women's education as to train women's mind and body to become efficient and self-sufficient mothers, while in the post-1947 period it chose to demand new career oriented courses for women. This chapter also documents the expanding educational activities of the AIWC.

The third chapter discusses how the AIWC addressed the issue of social legislation for women from 1927 to 1990. Among other things, the authors show that in 1927 the AIWC supported the Sarada and the Age of Consent Bills; in 1933 it discussed the divorce rights of women and demanded the reform of the Hindu law for inheritance; and in 1942, despite the Congress leaders' opposition to the AIWC's cooperation with the British government in appointing the Hindu Law Committee, the AIWC went ahead and fought for the Hindu Code Bill. Further, this chapter documents how the long drawn efforts of the AIWC was certainly an important factor in the passing of the Devadasi Abolition Act in 1947 and the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act in 1958.

The fifth chapter, as a follow-up of the fourth, describes the activities and programmes of the AIWC in the post-1947 period. The changing perceptions of the AIWC on the role of women in the family and in the public have also been discussed here. The book shows that the main activities of the AIWC during this period included efforts in rehabilitating the refugees after partition, carrying out family welfare programmes, undertaking health and rural welfare projects for women and children, providing shelter for women in social distress, starting a legal aid cell for women and conducting drug de-addiction camps.

While the sixth chapter provides a chronological account of the AIWC's activities at the international level starting with its leader's travel to England in 1919 to give evidence for the Southborough Committee on franchise for women, the concluding seventh chapter places the role of the AIWC in the context of the general debates on gender equality and makes a brief critique of the AIWC's perceptions on women and the nature of its welfare activities. The authors here argue, despite their criticisms, that the AIWC has over the years transformed itself from a middle class oriented organisation to a mass-

based one. Apart from these chapters, the book carries twelve lengthy appendices which include the proceedings of the first AIWC conference in 1927, the AIWC memorandum on educational reform presented to the government, a list of presidents and general secretaries of the AIWC from 1926 to 1990, and short biographical notes on its prominent leaders.

Though the book is pithy in its empirical content, it suffers from a number of problems which are essentially analytic in nature. First of all, the authors have not sufficiently contextualised (and hence not sufficiently historicised) the activities of the AIWC by locating it in wider societal and political changes such as the emergence of the middle classes and their role in shaping the nationalist as well as the reconstituted gender ideology, changed gender relations within the family and outside, and the simultaneous presence of and the contest between progressive and revivalist tendencies within the nationalist politics and its impact on the AIWC. This insufficient historicisation reflects rather starkly in the book's inability/refusal to analyse the contending ideological trends within the AIWC and the book, by and large, portrays the AIWC as a homogeneous body (which is in fact contrary to the evidence available in the book itself). The fact of the matter is that there was the concurrent presence of progressive and retrogressive tendencies within the AIWC (as often reflected in the debates between women social reformers and women nationalist leaders in the AIWC) and over the years the retrogressive tendencies, with its allegiance to Congress-kind nationalism, emerged as the prominent one. This is exactly how the AIWC transformed itself into a mere social welfare organisation supporting only the Congress governments and its policies in its later career. In this process, it played rather a marginal role (except during the pre-independence period) in the women's movement in this country. Perhaps the best illustration here would be its perverse reaction to the Muslim Women's Bill. If the authors have played down their criticisms of the AIWC and have come out with an adulatory picture of it, the reasons are not far to seek. The book is some sort of an official history of the AIWC and it carries a foreword by its present president, Ms. Ashoke Gupta, a foreword which is an appeal to the younger generation to cherish the so-called glorious traditions of the AIWC and to contribute to its growth.

ANANDHI. S.  
Centre for Historical Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University,  
New Delhi.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Power and Conflict*

Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Power and Conflict: Towards a General Theory* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications 1989), pp. x + 265, price: \$35.00 (Hard back) \$16.195 (Paper back).

This is a welcome addition to the rapidly increasing literature on the conflict processes and perhaps the most ambitious one. Blalock, a statistician and sociologist, has tried to unify theory and method to construct a highly complex general theory of social conflict, whether this be international warfare, racial conflict, labour-management dispute, exploitation, class conflict, colonialism or simple inter-personnel encounters. He makes it clear that his models focus heavily on conflict *processes*, not simply on causes of conflict, although 'many of these processes can be considered as having causal importance in their own right'. (p. 6) He is concerned with factors which not only instigate a conflict, but also keep it going and facilitate its termination. At the same time, he does not focus on the consequences or functions of conflict for the actors concerned or for other kinds of processes, as for example future exchange behaviours. His formulation is in the spirit of the theoretical work of Georg Simmel who emphasised the forms, rather than the content of specific conflicts.

This work begins with the premise that power and conflict processes are irrevocably intertwined. While many people tend to abhor a conflict, it may provide a hope for the underprivileged by changing the power relationship. In a world filled with powerful groups and individuals who tend to dominate and exploit others, 'conflict may be the only mechanism through which the subordinated parties can hope to turn the tables on gain a measure of freedom from exploitative relationships' (p. viii). Thus the models presented in the book are explicitly built on a power-dependence framework. In other intellectual traditions like game theory or bargaining models, power resources and mobilisation factors are treated as givens or as variables that the bargainers may use to influence the other party but that are not themselves subject to modification. In Blalock's opinion 'a more complete theoretical formulation must incorporate power factors in

such a way that they are subject to control, manipulation and change over the course of conflict process itself'. (p. 5) In other words, they are treated as both endogenous as well as exogenous variables.

The novelty of Blalock's approach lies in the use of what he calls 'modified rational actor model', based on subjective expected utilities. He allows for multiplicity of goals that include not only 'economic' motives but also those that may be largely shaped by ideological factors or by interests that are basically irrelevant to the conflict at hand. Subjective probabilities may be influenced by misperceptions, ideological biases, deception, and a host of other factors that have little to do with objective experiences. Thus any 'maximising' that occurs will be far more complex than is implied in discussions of economic decision-making where, typically, only one or two goals are assumed by a theorist. Blalock's formulation seems to be compatible with Simon's notion of 'satisficing', or with the idea that rationality is 'bounded' by large number of conditioning constraints.

However, such an approach makes theorising very complex. One general model and several sub-models are introduced. The general causal model alone contains 40 variables and, therefore, 780 pairs of variables. The author modestly admits that 'it may be difficult for the reader to spot the forest because of the trees'. (p. 107) He also expects his general theory to accomplish basically 'a sensitizing function: calling attention to factors that are likely to be neglected in overly simplistic accounts. . . . and indicating how the pieces of the general puzzle fit together'. (p. viii) Nonetheless, to what extent all the complicated diagrams of different models would serve as a basis for empirical analysis would depend on whether all or most the variables they contain can be actually measured. At that level, a series of additional considerations not contained in this work must be confronted: whether or not to introduce auxiliary measurement theories so as to allow for measurement biases, whether or not to allow for nonlinearities, which of the many joint effects on a given variable are possibly nonadditive, whether or not discrete lag periods are to be used, how many data points need to be considered, etc.

Blalock's models are two-party models. Conflicts of any complexity and duration will practically always involve multiple parties. In some cases, some of them may be technically neutral third parties, either serving as mediators or regulating the nature and intensity of conflict. It is not clear whether Blalock's models can handle the additional complications involved if we take account the potential combinations in a three or multiple party conflict. Moreover, while using a rational actor model, the parties in conflict must be unambiguously defined. Therefore, it becomes problematic whenever one or both parties are quasi-groups, such as social classes, racial or ethnic groups or over-

lapping generations. Parties may be tightly organised or may be a coalition of diffused set of actors. One may doubt if such a diversity of parties can be handled in a single model.

PRAKASH SARANGI  
Department of Political Science  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Moral Evaluation of Money*

J. Parry and M. Bloch (eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. viii + 276, Price £ 25.00

Quite contrary to the usual notion regarding functions of money as universal in the form of medium, measure, standard and store, this volume highlights enormous variations in the moral evaluation of money across different cultures as well as different types of exchanges within the same culture. This highly relative schema emphasizes that the moral attitude towards money depends upon the cultural matrix into which it is incorporated. The western discourse about money has inhibited a proper appreciation of the variability in its cross-cultural construction. For Simmel, money is an instrument of freedom as well as a threat to the moral order. Marx links it to the more fundamental phenomenon of production for exchange. For both, however, money promotes individualism and erodes older community solidarities. Destructive of community, money depersonalizes social relations.

Across different cultures, however, there is a striking similarity in the relationship between a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual, often acquisitive activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order, between the transient individual and the enduring social order which transcends the individual. C.J. Fuller offers a critical deconstruction of *jajmani* system which is predicated upon a combination of historical inaccuracy, and the historical premise of unchanging 'traditional' India. The system has been used as an example of dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' economic systems. The anthropologists have ignored the significances of money exchanges and market integration in the 'traditional' Indian rural economy. The patron-client *jajmani* system and the division of the grain heap on community basis under *baluta* system are conceptually distinct and it is inaccurate to treat them as same. In fact, there is no discrete, isolable *jajmani* system. The historical evidence on state revenue payment in cash, vast scale of pre-colonial long distance trade, and existence of property rights in the pre-colonial period indicate



that the static, 'traditional' economy portrayed by Dumont and Marx did not actually exist and market exchange was an important feature of pre-colonial India.

J. Parry describes gifts or *dana* to funeral priests in holy city of Benares which entails moral perils of exchange. The *dana* is alienated as radically as possible and must never return to the donor because it is believed to embody his sins. It is immaterial whether such *dana* is in the form of money or goods. In this context money is not treated as depersonalised instrument. Like other gifts in kind, money retains moral qualities in such religious transactions. Interestingly, other types of gifts such as *bhent*, *bhiksha* or *chanda*, do not constitute a comparable moral peril. There is nothing to suggest that money is regarded as inherently dangerous and polluting medium in Indian culture. At one level there is marked contrast between the dangers inherent in commercial profits and the dangers inherent in the *dana*, at another level both kinds of acquisition are united in their subordination to the same cultural imperative that the objects of exchange must be kept in continual circulation, and it is this process of circulation which maintains the cosmic and social orders.

R.L. Stirrat discusses moral attitude of fishermen towards money in a village in northwest Coast of Sri Lanka who considered money as polluting which represented a rejection of the market economy based on impersonal and amoral nature of commodity exchange. The money was usually handled by women folk who sold fish and acted as the conduit through which the ideology of the market entered the village. There were, in fact, two contrasting moralities, one stressing competition, atomism and individualism; the other stressing balance, equivalence and solidarity. In Malay fishing community too, the polluting and anti-social qualities of money are banished to the world of women, who have the ability to purify money, to socialise it and invest it with the values and morality with which they themselves are most closely associated. Divided male money becomes united kin money through the inter-position of women in the house. The money earned by men and associated with inequality and competition becomes problematic for them. Just as fish are given to women to be cooked in the *dapur*; so money, the equivalent of fish, can be transformed by being handed over to women in the house for 'cooking' and then consumed.

For Fijians, the moral value of money changes according to the construction they place on transactions in which it is included. Money has a neutral moral value in explicit commodity exchanges; it is good in gift exchange because like any other gift it marks continuing obligations between kin, but it becomes problematic when its exchange confuse the ideal distinction between commodity and gift and call into question existing social relations. Money is purified through ceremonial exchange by *Yagona* drinking and made amenable to incorporation into traditional politico-economic, the 'Fijian way' of

life, according to C. Toren. In Imerina, in Central Madagascar, the moral neutrality is made evident. Maurice Bloch points out that in Imerina any traditional gift can be made either in kind or in money without the substitution having much significance. But sharp distinction is made between unpaid work carried out within the kinship bonds and paid work carried out for strangers. The former is considered morally good activity, the latter is an ambiguous or even an immoral activity. Similarly, there is a prohibition on selling ancestral lands to strangers but no objection to selling it for money to close relatives or for obligatory funeral rites. The ancestral goods including ancestral silver coins are preciously kept and not dispersed, whereas non-ancestral goods including currency, called *harena*, are considered desirable but morally irrelevant. Individuation is considered anti-descent and *harena* have to be distributed before death. Also, there is a prohibition on the planting of trees because these endure longer than the individual's life. The symbolism of money is inevitably linked with the position of exchange in the entire ideological system. The earlier writings have viewed money as giving rise to a particular world view, the emphasis here is how an existing world view gives rise to particular ways of representing money.

In Zimbabwe, medium spirits avoid the products of modern capitalist society, but money is not dangerous to medium or *mhondoro*. As chiefs began to be closely identified with the state under colonial rule, they lost their legitimacy as representatives of the ancestors, so the *mhondoro* mediums took over many of the responsibilities which they had held in the past. One means of demonstrating their opposition to the state was to refuse to make use of any of the commodities obtained only in exchange for cash. David Lan argues that the focus of traditional authority had shifted from chief and spirit medium to spirit medium alone but in local conception this implied a shift from the chiefs of the present to the chiefs of the past. M.J. Sallnow discusses cultural notions that surround the mining of precious metals in the Andean moral economy which consider mining as an illicit, amoral and ritually dangerous activity in which the successful prospector may well pay for his new found wealth with his life. The extraction, control and circulation of precious metals in pre-Hispanic times was wholly congruent with the cultural logic in which state power, community morality and subsistence production, locked together in a single ideological *gestalt*, are symbolised by the controlled release and transmission of gold and silver to the state. Anarchy and its inevitable concomitants, moral breakdown and the abandonment of food production, are symbolised by the collapse of those controls, the dissemination of precious metals to the populace. The supernatural perils of goldmining are a consequence, not of the ultimate commoditisation of the product, but of the cultural logic in which it is initially embedded. O. Harris shows that the twin processes of tribute

payment and mining economy have structured the meaning of money in Bolivia. The ethnic economy is not a natural economy. Interestingly, many exchanges with outsiders, whether of labour or products specifically avoid the use of money, while exchanges between *ayllu* members not uncommonly do involve money. Money as such is neutral; the flow of cash in the *ayllu* economy is limited for practical rather than for cultural or ideological reasons. There are in fact two types of money; *chullpa* or ancient money associated with the fertility of metal beneath the earth's surface, the less ancient Inka money engraved with the insignia of the state constitutes the mysterious and sacred source of actual currency.

The volume has raised a number of new propositions; firstly, that each culture assigns a specific meaning to money and hence different attitudes towards moral evaluation of money across different cultures; secondly, contrary to the western notions that introduction of money leads to radical changes in social and cultural beliefs, it can as well be argued that existing cultural notions and belief system lead to specific way of representing money; thirdly, within the same cultural parameters, the moral evaluation of money may be different for different types of exchanges and different transactional orders, and since these distinctive evaluations of transactional orders are related to the cultural-milieu as a whole, it is misleading to attribute them to money as such. But the argument of cultural logic should not be over-stretched because it will blind us to the fact that the role of money and human attitudes to it are ultimately governed by socio-economic development of a civilisation. Even the so-called cultural matrix is a product of the overall level of historical development.

BRAHMA NAND

Dept. of History, A.R.S.D. College  
Delhi University New Delhi

---

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA

---

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

'An Experiment that Failed'? E.M.S. Namboodiripad 3

Semitising Hinduism: Changing Paradigms of  
Brahmanical Integration Suvira Jaiswal 20

NOTE Individualising History: The 'Real' Self in  
*The Shadow Lines* Ajanta Sircar 33

REVIEW ARTICLE Myth as a Response to History  
Vibha Maurya 47

BOOK REVIEWS 57

OBITUARY Krishna Bharadwaj (21 August 1935 –  
8 March 1992) Utsa Patnaik 63

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 19

NUMBER 12

DEC. 1991

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

### Inland

Single issue	Rs. 15
Double issue	Rs. 20
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 150
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 200
Annual (students)	Rs. 100
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 225
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 300

(Rs. 10 extra if by outstation cheque)

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	60
Sea mail	50

ISSN 0970 - 0293

---

### Subscribers, please note:

Due to increased costs of production we have had to raise the subscription rates for *Social Scientist* as given above. The new rates have come into effect from issue no. 219-220 (Volume 19, Number 8-9).

---

The grant for publication from Indian Council of Historical Research is gratefully acknowledged.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial Note

Georg Lukacs in one of his last interviews had suggested that if the transition from feudalism to capitalism took about three hundred years, there was no reason to believe why the transition from capitalism to socialism should not be an equally protracted one; this according to him was one area where a revision of the earlier Marxist belief was necessary. Lukacs' interview of course was long before the recent events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but his remarks have a prophetic ring, anticipating the possibility of reversals in the process of transition, but asserting at the same time that such reversals do not negate the historical reality of the transition process. To assert this reality of course is not just a matter of blind faith or a misplaced argument by analogy. Today, when communists, shorn of pomp and power, head mass demonstrations and battle with riot police on Moscow streets in protest against skyrocketing food-prices which the Great Leap Backwards to capitalism has brought to the people of Russia, this reality appears as strong as ever.

The question nonetheless remains: why did the reversal take place? We had promised our readers in an earlier issue that we would be devoting a good deal of our space to discussions on this theme. In keeping with that promise, we publish as the lead article in the current number of *Social Scientist*, a piece by E.M.S. Namboodiripad that is addressed to the question. The article has a wide range, but among its many observations, one that deserves particular notice is the author's remark that capitalism's greater ability to harness the scientific and technological revolution was an important contributory factor to the reverses suffered by socialism. Much has been written on the failures of extant socialism; while this is of course important, any attempt at explaining the fate of socialist countries exclusively in terms of their internal characteristics without taking into reckoning the career of capitalism, can at best be a partial one. Surely the collapse of socialism is a result not merely of the legacy of Stalin, but also of the fact that capitalism in the post-war period has displayed unexpected dynamism; and yet this latter aspect has scarcely received the attention that it deserves. With Namboodiripad's touching on this aspect, we hope there will be further discussion on it.

Hinduism is a concept that eludes easy definition. To say that it is characterized by the fact that all Hindus call upon the authority of the Vedas to legitimise their doctrines and practices is untenable; indeed as Suvira Jaiswal argues in her paper, such a definition amounts to an illegitimate semitisation of Hinduism, to treating it as being isomorphic with the semitic religions, with the Vedas being the counterpart of the Quran or the Bible. She prefers instead to take the Hindu *social system*, characterised above all by the caste-structure, as being an important constitutive element of Hinduism. Hinduism can tolerate any kind of theology, can display any amount of religious pluralism, provided the upholders of such divergent beliefs remain assimilated within the social hierarchy of the caste-system. The caste-system to be sure is not exclusive to the Hindus; followers of other religions in India such as the Buddhists, Jains, Muslims and Christians also have caste divisions among them; but while in their case it is a carry-over by the converts, in Hinduism caste is central. This centrality is demonstrated by the fact that even movements, such as the Arya Samaj movement, which had the professed objective of establishing a casteless society, could not break out of the endogamous caste-structure and ended up having an attitude to the low castes which was paternalist rather than egalitarian. It is significant that the votaries of *Hindutva* today whose professed aim is 'to ensure a 'proper place' for the Hindus in the public realm are deafeningly silent on the question of caste.

Finally we publish as a note an analysis of Amitava Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* which underscores the failure of the book to offer 'a liberating and radical redescription of the post-colonial context' in India.

P.S. While this issue was in press, we got news of the sad and untimely demise of Professor Krishna Bharadwaj, the eminent economist from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, who was a contributor to *Social Scientist* and one of its ardent well-wishers. We deeply grieve the loss of Professor Bharadwaj and offer our condolences to the bereaved family. One of her colleagues, Utsa Patnaik, has written a brief obituary piece on her for this number.



E.M.S. NAMBOODIRIPAD\*

## *'An Experiment that Failed'?*

More than half a century ago, young men and women of this writer's generation were attracted towards Marxism-Leninism. Highly impressed as we were by the epoch-making victories of the First Five-Year Plan in the Soviet Union in the midst of the most serious crisis in the history of world capitalism, we would have been scandalised to hear that socialist construction in the USSR was an 'experiment'. The implied suggestion that the course undertaken by the Soviet comrades might fail was then unthinkable for us.

Today, however, talks are going on that not only have the socialist experiments in the USSR and Eastern Europe failed, but world socialism has collapsed. Adversaries of the socialist movement argue that, far from the Soviet Union being the starting point of humanity's transition from capitalism to socialism, the socialist countries in Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union have begun their march from socialism to capitalism. From this they go on to add that the theory of Marxism-Leninism itself has failed.

We Marxist-Leninists are above all realists and, as realists, we concede that the recent events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are a major setback to world socialism. We are therefore engaging ourselves in the process of a deep examination of the reasons why these developments took place and whether the trend that manifested itself in these developments can be reversed.

For answering these questions, however, it is necessary to go back to the essence of Marxism-Leninism. For, the more than 70 years of socialist construction since the October Revolution of 1917 were the manifestation of the essence of Marxism-Leninism, the state of the working class. But distortions took place in the process of socialist construction. We therefore have to distinguish between the practice of Marxism with all its distortions and the essence of Marxism-Leninism.

Marx, Engels and Lenin were voluminous writers and they spoke profusely as the theorists of socialist revolution. They outlined the

---

\* Member, Polit Bureau, Communist Party of India (Marxist), New Delhi.

general path along which capitalism will be replaced by socialism. At the same time, they were not merely theorists but men of action and, in this capacity, they wrote and spoke on innumerable current developments. There developed a tendency, after they were gone, to confuse their pronouncements on current developments with their perception of the way in which capitalism would be replaced by socialism.

Those of us who did embrace Marxism-Leninism after the gigantic developments in the Soviet Union in the thirties and forties thought that what was happening in the Soviet Union was the essence of Marxism-Leninism. That however was only a half-truth. As Lenin himself had pointed out in his day, all countries and peoples would march towards socialism but not in exactly the same manner. The socialist 'experiment' in the Soviet Union was a mixture of the general and the concrete. To raise the concrete to the level of the general was the fallacy into which many of us fell. Let us therefore see what is the essence of the general theory of Marxism.

Firstly, the laws of the development of capitalism as a system (which were briefly dealt with in the joint Marx-Engels work, *Communist Manifesto* and the much larger work, Marx's *Capital*) were such that the periodical economic crises of capitalism would inevitably grow into a general crisis out of which the only solution is the emergence of socialism.

Secondly, capitalism thus continuously creates the objective conditions of its replacement by socialism. At the same time, it creates a subjective force which will operate in the process of humanity's transition from capitalism to socialism—the organised working class.

Further developing these two major concepts of Marxism, Lenin pointed out that the emergence of monopoly capitalism created such a crisis in the system of capitalism that imperialist wars, national revolutionary wars and other peoples' upheavals have become the order of the day.

Lenin however was not only the great theoretician who applied the theory of Marxism to the realities of the era of imperialism. He was also the practical leader of the Russian and world working class who saw that his country was the weakest link in the chain of capitalism where therefore the working class could take power and start the process of socialist construction. He thus became the founding father of the first land of socialism in the world.

It was to further expand and elaborate these essential concepts of Marxism-Leninism that the three giants of the revolutionary proletariat undertook their theoretical and practical work. The great masters are, in other words, the effective exponents of the theory of proletarian revolution and at the same time practical activists who helped the development of the subjective force that operates in the

process of transition from capitalism to socialism—the world proletariat.

As important as the theoretical writings of Marx and Engels is the fact that, beginning with the League of the Just which was transformed into the Communist League and ending with the organisation of the First International in the days of Marx and of the Second International when Engels survived Marx, Marxism gave the world not only the theory but the subjective force that was to transform that theory into practice.

Lenin supplemented his theoretical works such as *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *Imperialism the Last Stage of Capitalism* with the organisation of the Third (Communist) International. It was this latter action of Lenin that brought together in a single organisation the working class of Europe and the millions of oppressed peoples of the non-European countries. The evolution of Marxism-Leninism was thus not only the substantiation of the theory but the ever-expanding organisation of the working class and the oppressed peoples of the whole world.

This process has had its advances and retreats.

The European revolutionary wars of the 1840s which brought Marx and Engels to the fore as the theoretical and practical leaders of the world proletariat, were followed by a period of reaction. There was however a revival of the revolutionary movement during their own lifetime, the glorious Paris Commune of 1871 being the high watermark of advance in their day. That revolutionary outbreak did not last more than a few weeks.

Though brutally suppressed, it made a lasting impression on the consciousness of the world working class. Its experience was used by Marx and Engels to further enrich the theory of state and revolution. In Lenin's own time, the oppressed peoples of the East became awakened and joined the organised working class of the advanced capitalist countries.

His own country, Russia, witnessed three revolutions in his lifetime—1905, February 1917 and November 1917. The 1917 November Revolution in Russia could not be suppressed but many others including the greatest of them, the German Revolution of 1918, were suppressed. The last years of Lenin's life were thus a period of the retreat of revolution in other European countries but of success for the Russian Revolution. He, therefore, had to march along the path of socialist construction in a very backward country, while capitalism had triumphed in the major developed capitalist countries.

#### LENIN'S EXPERIMENTS AND VISION

During the half-a-decade left to him after the 1917 Revolution, Lenin made two experiments—the War Communism of 1918-21 and the New Economic Policy of 1922-24. He knew that, although socialist

construction can begin in a single backward country like Russia, its completion had to await proletarian revolutions in the major developed capitalist countries. He thus saw the need for a prolonged period of peaceful co-existence between the single socialist country that existed then and the large number of capitalist countries that encircled it. He found that socialism can be victorious on a world scale only if socialism wins in its competition with capitalism in economic production. Building a socialist society in the Soviet Union was thus the key to the international transition of capitalism to socialism.

Did Lenin's successors act according to the directive issued by him? Academicians and political activists in the Soviet Union assert that they did not. Mentioning Stalin by name, they accused him of betraying Lenin's legacy. No serious student of the economy and polity of the Soviet Union when its leadership was in the hands of Stalin however can ignore the epoch-making victories won by the Soviet Union in the three decades when Stalin was at its head. Without in any way minimising the negative aspects of Stalin's leadership, let us catalogue here the great achievements of that period.

Firstly, it was at that time that the Soviet Union recorded breathtaking developments in economic construction. In the matter of a single decade, the Soviet Union had such industrial, agricultural and all-round development as had taken several decades for the capitalist countries to achieve. The advances registered during the First and Second Five Year Plans were so impressive that a large number of bourgeois intellectuals in capitalist countries and national revolutionary activists in colonial countries were attracted towards planned economy. In our own country, it was the 'Soviet experiment' that prompted the intellectual-administrator, the late M. Visweswarayya, to write a book under the title 'Planning in India'. Never before in history had such a development taken place and never had so many millions been attracted towards socialism.

Secondly, supported by these epoch-making advances in economic construction, the Soviet Red Army, the State and its people were able to win such a resounding military victory over the forces of fascism in Europe and militarism in Asia that democrats and champions of peace world over were attracted towards the Soviet Union and the socialist system. The economic development of the thirties and the military victories of the forties made the Soviet Union a force to reckon with. It was this that made the Soviet Union, in the subsequent period, a 'super' power, approximately equal to the mightiest capitalist power in the world, the United States.

Thirdly, through the Soviet State and through the Communist International (till the latter was dissolved in 1943), the Soviet leadership was able to translate the Leninist slogan 'Workers and oppressed peoples of the world, unite' into a reality. It was in this period that gigantic revolutionary movements developed in China, the

Indo-Chinese countries and several other Asian lands. It was in this period again that, in India itself, the Left movement led by the communists became a force to reckon with. Furthermore, dozens of colonial, semi-colonial and dependent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America joined the mainstream of the worldwide struggle for democracy, national liberation, world peace and socialism.

It was this that, in the post-Stalin years, led to the emergence of a powerful anti-imperialist movement which culminated in the liberation of scores of countries in the sixties and seventies. The bourgeois democratic leaders of these countries (including Nehru in our own country) were attracted towards world communism. That was why, on receiving the news of Stalin's death in March 1953, Nehru issued a moving statement which came from his heart.

#### KHRUSHCHEV AND AFTER

Against these and other achievements of the Stalin period of socialist construction in the Soviet Union however should be set certain negative aspects. The most important of these is the denial of democracy in the state political system as well as in the internal working of the Soviet Communist Party. This was denounced at the 20th Congress of the CPSU by Khrushchev. A term was coined, 'the cult of Stalin's personality', meaning thereby that all the achievements of the great Soviet people and their great party, the CPSU, were ascribed to Stalin personally.

Along with other fraternal parties, the then undivided Communist Party of India endorsed this criticism of the cult of Stalin's personality. It however added that, in place of the ascription of all the achievements of society to Stalin earlier, the Khrushchev leadership now was ascribing all the negative aspects of socialist construction in the Soviet Union to Stalin. In other words, Stalin who was hailed as god in the old days was now demoted to a demon. This unhistorical approach to the cult of Stalin's personality was decisively rejected by the undivided CPI at that time. The CPI(M) today continues to hold the same view on the Gorbachev critique of Stalin and his successors.

Even at the risk of being accused of 'Stalinism', the CPI(M) considers the period of Stalin's leadership as a mixture of the positive and the negative. It inspired millions of people throughout the world to become partisans in the worldwide struggle for peace, democracy, national liberation and socialism. While on the one hand it added great prestige to the world communist movement, on the other hand it created a sense of revulsion in the minds of genuine democrats and socialists throughout the world. Paradoxical though it may appear, the fact is that Stalin was a great leader of the proletarian revolutionary movement and at the same time committed grave errors which led to serious distortions. It is a tragedy of history that he did

many things under the mistaken impression that those things were necessary for the advance of the USSR and the world revolutionary movement.

Concluding this part of the article—the positive and negative aspects of socialist construction in the Soviet Union since Lenin—let us note that, while we should show no mercy to the negative aspects that crept in during this period, we should never underestimate the positive gains, as the Soviet leaders like Khrushchev and Gorbachev have been doing. We should, in fact, castigate them for so misusing the critique of Stalin's personalty cult that they became the agency through which millions of Soviet people were roused against the socialist system. The present crisis of Soviet society and world communism had its origins in the distortions of the Stalin period but they were compounded by the unhistorical assessment of Stalin by the leaders of the USSR from Khrushchev to Gorbachev.

It was Khrushchev, as noted above, who started, at the 20th congress of the CPSU, the process of negatively assessing the role played by Stalin in the Soviet Union's socialist construction. It was subsequently taken up by Gorbachev. There is however a major difference between the two Soviet leaders: while denigrating Stalin, virtually negating the positive role played by him, Khrushchev never totally abandoned the basic opposition in the Soviet policy towards imperialism. Gorbachev, on the other hand, abandoned the fundamental positions of class struggle as applied to socialist construction in the Soviet Union as well as to the role of the Soviet Union in the anti-imperialist struggle throughout the world.

Khrushchev began his denunciation of Stalin's cult of personalty—his secret report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU—with the observation that he was not dealing with the positive achievements of Stalin which were well-known. It was however necessary, he pointed out, to draw attention to the negative aspects, since they had become a hindrance to the further development of Soviet society. In the conclusion of his report too, he said that all the negative things that Stalin did were not the actions of a megalomaniac but those of a person who mistakenly thought that they were necessary for the advance of the proletariat's cause. It is however a fact that the total impression created by this report was the highlighting of the negative aspects of Stalin's personality at the expense of the positive. This was the reason why the undivided CPI and other fraternal parties considered the Khrushchev report unhistorical. The CPI(M) considers it the beginning of a slide to revisionism.

Gorbachev, on the other hand, did not confine himself to a negative critique of Stalin's personality and activities. He went to the root of communist politics—class struggle which he denied. Evolving his theory of 'human values which should have priority over class struggle', he started negating the existence of imperialism which is

militarising its economy and driving towards destructive wars, exploiting and suppressing colonial countries, etc. This was the essence of his report to the celebration meeting of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia.

The delegation of the CPI(M) which was present at the celebration meeting immediately recorded its dissent before the leadership of the CPSU and then had detailed discussions in a party-to-party meeting with the CPSU. The Central Committee subsequently adopted a resolution clearly demarcating itself from the major propositions of the Gorbachev report at the celebration meeting. The resolution pointed out that, though the CPSU and other forces of world peace have gained many victories in the struggle against the war-mongering imperialist powers, imperialism headed by U.S. imperialism was still as strong and vicious as ever before. The Party demarcated itself also from Gorbachev's theory that imperialism can exist without the drive towards war and without exploiting the colonies. The Party thus reasserted the proposition that the struggle for world peace and for the liberation of oppressed peoples makes it necessary to carry on a vigorous worldwide struggle against imperialism.

The so-called 'new thinking' of Gorbachev did not confine itself to the field of the worldwide struggle against imperialism, the forces of war and those of colonialism. It embraced also the process of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. His theory of Perestroika and Glasnost were calculated to amend the basic premises of the economy and polity of Marxism-Leninism under the cover of 'correction of the distortions' that had crept into the Soviet economy and polity; he took the legitimate struggle against bureaucratism and authoritarianism to the point of embracing bourgeois democracy.

The CPI(M) however took time to make a critique of these internal aspects of the Gorbachev reforms, firstly because though it had reservations on the concrete nature of the economic and political reforms that were being introduced, it did agree on the need for reforms. (It agreed with the proposition that distortions had crept into the economic as well as political aspects of socialist construction and therefore they needed to be corrected.) Secondly, being a fraternal party in another country, the CPI(M) did not consider itself competent to judge the correctness or otherwise of individual measures, particularly since the concrete reforms were being slowly unfolded. The 13th Congress of the Party held in December 1988 therefore directed the Central Committee to make a comprehensive critique of the Gorbachev reforms and to come out with the critique after detailed examination.

The developments of the following months confirmed the worst fears of the Party. The concrete measures worked out in the name of Perestroika and Glasnost revealed themselves as a process of surely and steadily putting the market above planning and replacing

proletarian democracy with bourgeois democracy. The inevitable consequence was steady deterioration in the economic conditions of the country as well as in the steady march towards bourgeois democracy. Unleashing all the forces of national disintegration, it transformed the once-united Socialist Soviet Union into a collection of independent nationalities, each of which challenged the authority of the central government. We see today that the Socialist Soviet Union has been dissolved even from a formal point of view, being replaced by a Commonwealth of Independent States. Gorbachev, the leader of the Socialist Soviet Union, has been replaced by Yeltsin, the leader of the Russian republic and the leaders of 10 other independent states who constitute the new Commonwealth of Independent States. This certainly was the end of the Soviet Union which dominated world politics at least in the post-Second World War period.

#### EASTERN EUROPE AND CHINA

Another tragedy, apart from the demise of the first land of socialism, is the tragedy that had occurred earlier in country after country in East Europe which were, at the end of the Second World War, transformed from capitalist to socialist countries. The 'new thinking' of Gorbachev thus started the process of the transformation of these countries from socialism to capitalism. Country after country which, for more than a generation, had enjoyed the benefits of socialist society with no unemployment, with stable prices for the essential commodities needed by the common people and with an extensive network of social services including education, health, housing, etc., was taken back to the days of capitalism with staggering unemployment, sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities and denial of social services for the common people.

Furthermore, many of these countries witnessed the re-emergence of fascist forces which had been eliminated under the heavy blows administered by the Soviet Red Army in the Second World War. For these countries therefore, it was a question of movement from light to darkness. The personal responsibility of Gorbachev for these developments cannot be denied, since it was his 'new thinking' that laid the basis for these tragic developments in the East European socialist countries.

China too was taken to the brink of such a disaster. April to June of 1989 were crucial months for the People's Republic of China, since Gorbachev's 'new thinking' had percolated down to the urban middle class in China; it had even affected a section of the leadership of the Communist Party of China. There was however a determined and united leadership of the Communist Party which unhesitatingly removed two general secretaries in succession and rallied the people of China against the foreign-inspired destabilisation. China thus escaped the fate of the East European countries and of the Soviet Union



only thanks to the timely and determined measures taken by the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

This raises the following questions: Why did these developments take place? Why did the line of Khrushchev and Gorbachev arise in the Soviet Union? How did they develop in the East European countries? The answer to these questions should be sought in the fact that, while socialism in its earlier phase made gigantic advances in the Soviet Union and other countries which embraced socialism at the end of the Second World War, it lagged behind capitalism in the subsequent phase. For almost half a century since the beginning of the First Five Year Plan in the Soviet Union, socialism won victory after victory in economic construction to declare that, having won the battle of socialism, communist society would emerge in the Soviet Union.

Subsequently, however, a new phenomenon made its appearance in the capitalist countries—the scientific and technological revolution. This enabled the capitalist countries to win the battle of economic competition with the socialist countries. The Soviet economy, which was far more advanced than its earlier Russian economy, fell behind the capitalist economy in the period of scientific and technological revolution. This set the leaders of the socialist world thinking as to how they could catch up with the capitalist world. They found that the methods of socialist construction adopted earlier have to be radically changed with the borrowing of many methods of construction from the capitalist countries. A serious debate ensued among the economists and political leaders of socialist countries—the Soviet Union in particular.

#### TWO OUTCOMES OF THE DEBATE

There were however two outcomes of this debate. One was seen in China whose methods of economic construction changed beyond recognition. Reform and opening to the world was outlined by the Chinese leaders long before Gorbachev came on the scene in the Soviet Union. Directed and led by Deng Tsiao Ping, the Chinese leaders adopted from capitalist society many methods of economic construction. The Chinese, in fact, were the pioneers of a movement which in Gorbachev's Soviet Union assumed the name of Perestroika.

China however insisted that the reform of the economic system should strictly be within the limits of what they called the four cardinal principles—the socialist system, dictatorship of people's democracy, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Thought and the leadership of the Communist Party. Borrow from capitalism but use it in the interest of socialism; permit the penetration of capitalism in certain sections of the economy but only under the overall control of the socialist State led by the Communist Party—this was the basis of the process of economic reform undertaken by the Chinese Communist Party. Functioning as it was under the system of people's democratic dictatorship, with the

leadership of the Communist Party assured over the management of the national polity, the leaders of the government and Party in China were able to rally the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people against the gang of disrupters and destabilisers who created the Tiananmen upheaval.

This stands in marked contrast to the Soviet Union where successive generations of leaders (from Khrushchev to Gorbachev) undermined the ideological basis first and then the political and administrative basis of the proletarian state which was building socialism. Gorbachev's 'new thinking' was the thinking of a generation of state and party leaders who had been corrupted by the ideology of imperialism abroad and the internal forces hostile to the development of socialism. The process began with Khrushchev's denigration of Stalin and ended in the ideological and political disarmament of the Soviet people under Gorbachev's 'new thinking'. The tragedy of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was thus the result of the failure on the part of the subjective factor—the governmental and party leadership of Soviet society—though it had an objective basis, the lagging of socialist society behind capitalism in the face of the scientific and technological revolution.

Was this the failure of socialist society as such or of Marxist-Leninist theory in general, as is asserted by the enemies of socialism? Or was it a failure of the subjective factor—the governments and ruling communist parties in socialist countries as is analysed by the Marxist-Leninists? If it was the former, socialism should have collapsed not only in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, but also in China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. Furthermore, in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the people at large should have meekly accepted the transition from socialism to capitalism without resistance. We see however that, while China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba are still holding aloft the banner of Socialism, the peoples in the former socialist countries are showing signs of resistance to the new set-up. There is therefore every reason for hope that the victory of the anti-socialist forces recorded in the East European countries and in the Soviet Union would be temporary and that forces of socialism will win against the counter-revolution, making it possible for new advances in the worldwide process of transition from capitalism to socialism.

This narration of Soviet developments in the days of Lenin and after his death enables us to answer the question posed in the beginning of this article: was the construction of socialism in the USSR an experiment, and if so, was it a failure, as is asserted by the adversaries of socialism?

## WORLD PERSPECTIVE

The answer is that the Socialist Soviet Union was embarking on a new experiment in world history. Departing from the generalisations made by Marx and Engels that the transition to socialism will take place on a world scale and that it will begin where capitalism had so developed as to give rise to an insoluble contradiction, the working class took power in a single country far more backward than Europe, America and one or two countries in Asia. Defying the predictions of the prophets of doom that the attempt at building socialism in a single country surrounded by capitalist countries will fail, the socialist Soviet Union continued to move forward for over seven decades and helped other countries in Eastern Europe and in Asia to start building socialist societies in their respective countries. Not even the most prejudiced critic of the socialist system can deny that the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union first and then in Eastern Europe and such Asian countries as China, Korea, and Vietnam as well as in Cuba in the western hemisphere succeeded in developing those countries. The socialist experiment was in this sense an undoubted success.

It should however be noted that, despite the successes in relatively backward countries, no developed capitalist country witnessed a socialist revolution for more than seven decades. Furthermore, instead of world socialism catching up with and overtaking the capitalist world, capitalism has marched ahead, particularly since the scientific and technological revolution of the last couple of decades. In this sense, the socialist experiment was a failure.

This however does not mean that the retreat from socialism which began in Eastern Europe and spread to the Soviet Union proves that capitalism as a world system is superior to socialism. On the other hand, the advances registered in the socialist countries during the first stage of their construction—their record in eliminating unemployment, in keeping prices stable and steady, in providing the people with education, health, housing and other socio-cultural amenities—stands in marked contrast to the crisis-ridden capitalist society with its increasing unemployment, escalating prices of essential commodities and the denial of essential socio-cultural amenities like education, health, housing and so on to the people. While socialism could not catch up with and overtake capitalism in economic construction, it showed its superiority over capitalism in providing the people with a better life. It is therefore inevitable that, both in the countries which had started building socialism but have abandoned it of late, as well as in the countries where capitalism is still growing, the people will rally behind socialism and against capitalism. Neither capitalism in its pure form, nor in the form which has been superimposed on the former socialist countries can survive the will of the people who, for

several decades, have seen the contrast between socialism and capitalism, in their lives.

It is of course difficult to forecast how the political system will be renewed in the former socialist countries and how the struggle between the forces of capitalism and socialism will shape up in the developed capitalist countries. But the very existence of the socialist system for over half a century in a part of the world, its economic, political and cultural victories in this period, will have a permanent imprint on the consciousness of the people everywhere.

#### PRESENT-DAY WORLD

Let us recall that Marxist-Leninist literature has been drawing attention to four major contradictions in world politics since, following the October Revolution in Russia, the world came to be divided into capitalist and socialist. The contradiction between capitalism and socialism on a world scale was thus the first of the contradictions. That however has now been dissolved temporarily in favour of capitalism. There are however three other major contradictions each of which is still relevant and active. These will act and react on the contradiction between world capitalism and world socialism.

Firstly, the contradiction between the working people as a whole and a small group of monopoly capitalists in developed capitalist countries. This contradiction is not only continuing but is likely to get more and more intensified, since the economy of capitalism is caught in a serious, ever-intensifying crisis. The unemployed masses, the ill-paid workers and the exploited middle strata are bound to take the path of struggle in defence of their livelihood. They will inevitably be joined by sections from the ruling classes who are increasingly feeling the consequences of the growth of monopolies. Anti-monopoly united fronts and struggles are thus bound to be the order of the day in all developed capitalist countries.

Secondly, there is the contradiction among the ruling classes of the developed capitalist countries themselves. The ever-intensifying economic crisis of capitalism is bound to make the ruling classes in different developed capitalist countries fight among themselves. The indications of this are available in the emergence of three major groups of developed capitalist countries—the U.S.A. in the western hemisphere, the European community which is steadily consolidating and growing as a rival to the United States and Japan in Asia. While being impelled by class interests to unite themselves against the common foe—world socialism—the very same class interests lead them on to various forms of economic and political competition among the three major centres of world capitalism.

Thirdly, there is the overwhelming majority of humanity living in the Third World countries who are being increasingly pitted against world imperialism. In the new global situation in which the Soviet

Union has ceased to be a 'super-power', the United States and its allies in the developed capitalist countries have become audacious enough to launch attacks on the Third World countries. Not only the common people but even sections of the ruling classes in the Third World countries are bound to resist. The contradiction between imperialism and the Third World has in fact now assumed an importance which was lacking when the Soviet Union continued to enjoy the status of a 'super-power'.

It is of course true that the working people in the Third World countries are increasingly pitted against their own (nation's) ruling classes. This internal contradiction however is integrally connected with the contradiction between the nation as a whole and imperialism.

It is in this context that the three other major contradictions will get intensified by the very fact that socialism as a world system has lost its status as a major world force. It is however indisputable that the four major contradictions will not only not get resolved but will further intensify, acting and reacting on one another.

#### BANNER OF SOCIALISM IN FOUR COUNTRIES

It is in this context that the four countries which are still holding aloft the banner of socialism—China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—are operating in world politics. Learning from the positive and negative lessons taught by socialist construction in the Soviet Union and East European socialist countries, they are seeking to improve the socialistic construction in their respective countries. Determined as they are that further socialist construction in their respective countries would eliminate the distortions that took place in the Soviet Union and the East European countries, they are trying to evolve their own path of advance to socialism. To the extent to which they succeed in avoiding the debacle that overtook the East European countries and the Soviet Union and build socialism in their respective countries in consonance with the concrete situation in their countries, they would be making a positive contribution to the evolution of new forms of socialism in the developed and developing capitalist countries of the world.

It is in this context also that Marxist-Leninists in the developed and developing capitalist countries are learning from the experience of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and in the East European countries and working out their own ways of going forward to socialism (as in the developed capitalist countries), or of carrying out and completing the democratic revolution in such a way as to lay the basis for the subsequent building of socialism (as in the developing Third World countries). Marxism-Leninism is thus being renovated with the lessons learnt from the positive and negative experiences of socialist

construction as it took place in the Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries.

The international situation that has emerged after the collapse of the East European countries and the Soviet Union is thus not one of gloom, as if the era of socialist construction has come to an end and capitalism has come before the people as the only viable socialist system for humanity. On the other hand, the contradictions in capitalism are so deep and the forces of socialism are so strong in all parts of the world that the temporary retreat of socialism will rapidly come to an end, and world socialism will start a new forward movement. This requires that Marxist-Leninists should pay attention to the major problems of theory and ideology which have been thrown up by the developments in the East European countries and in the Soviet Union. Let us therefore now turn to a discussion of these questions.

#### CLASS STRUGGLE AND HUMAN VALUES

Gorbachev had posed the question as one of conflict between class struggle and human values. In fact, however, there is no such conflict. Class struggle is the basis on which struggle for democracy and socialism is organised. It is, in other words, a question of the proletariat overthrowing its class adversary, the worst enemy of human values, and thus laying the basis of the flowering of human values. We of the CPI(M) reject the 'theory' of priority for human values over class struggle. We adhere to the theory and practice of class struggle.

In practice, of course, class struggle as practised in socialist countries led to a situation in which human values were violated. That is the most important distortion that occurred in the construction of socialism. In the name of removing the distortions, however, class struggle itself was abandoned, human values being counterposed to class struggle. While rejecting this method of upholding 'human values', we stand for the preservation and strengthening of human values under proletarian rule.

#### DEMOCRACY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

This raises the question of democracy in the struggle for socialism and its relation to the Marxist-Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This too was in practice distorted, giving rise to the dictatorship of the Party over the proletariat and the dictatorship of the Party leadership over the Party ranks. There is therefore legitimate apprehension that, so long as the Marxist-Leninists uphold the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is every danger of these distortions reappearing.

The renunciation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the adoption of bourgeois democracy, however, will endanger the

democracy of the overwhelming majority of the people which is the essence of proletarian dictatorship. The leadership of the CPSU and the East European parties gave up the concept of proletarian dictatorship and embraced bourgeois democracy. The result is that the process of 'peaceful transition' from socialism to capitalism had begun in those countries.

In China, on the other hand, the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was adapted to the conditions of China, giving rise to the concept of dictatorship of people's democracy, i.e. the State power exercised by the overwhelming majority of the people led by the working class on the basis of worker-peasant alliance taking firm measures against the enemies of socialism and preserving the gains of socialism. The results of the two methods are seen in the fact that socialism continues to flourish in China, while it has been destabilised in the Soviet Union and East European countries. Variants of the Chinese model are being applied in Korea, Vietnam and Cuba as well.

Neither the dictatorship of the proletariat nor the dictatorship of peoples democracy is to be applied in other countries including our own India. Conditions in this country are favourable for the effective use of the bourgeois parliamentary democratic system in the interest of developing the struggle for proletarian statehood. We stand for the strengthening, in the interest of the common people, of the bourgeois democratic parliamentary system.

It should be borne in mind that the state system in the Soviet Union and East European countries evolved itself in the process of class struggle. Proletarian revolution that took place in the Soviet Union had to defend itself against the internal and foreign enemies. That was how the state political system in that country arose. As for the East European countries they destroyed the remnants of fascism and started socialist construction under the benign protection of the Soviet Red Army. That was how the characteristic features of proletarian dictatorship arose in those countries. China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba on the other hand have had their revolutions under conditions which were the specific characteristics of those countries. Hence the dictatorship of the people's democracy in China and its variants in Korea, Viet Nam and Cuba.

In India, the proletarian class and general democratic movement has been developing under conditions of the flowering of bourgeois parliamentary democracy which creates the conditions for the steady development of the democratic socialist movement of the Indian working class. There is therefore no stereotype model to be indiscriminately applied in all countries.

#### SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNISM

The revolutionary party of the working class however would not be bound by the stereo-type evolved by the right-wing social democracy

against which Lenin in his day had launched a fierce offensive. The working class and its class allies never renounce the method of extra-parliamentary action including, if need be, resort to arms if the class enemy resorts to arms against the revolution. This is the basic issue raised in Lenin's classic polemics against Kautsky. There are sections of Marxist-Leninists who would adopt the Kautskian method as against the Leninist. The CPI(M) however refuses to be tied down by any particular method including the parliamentary system. The CPI(M) for instance, declares in its Programme:

The Communist Party of India strives to achieve the establishment of people's democracy and socialist transformation through peaceful means. By developing a powerful mass revolutionary movement, by combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle, the working class and its allies will try their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and to bring about these transformations through peaceful means.

However, it needs always to be borne in mind that the ruling classes never relinquish their power voluntarily. They seek to defy the will of the people and seek to reverse it by lawlessness and violence. It is, therefore, necessary for the revolutionary forces to be vigilant and so orientate their work that they can face up to all contingencies, to any twist and turn in the political life of the country.

The pre-split CPI and post-split CPI(M) have shown their willingness and capacity to use the methods of the parliamentary system including participation in governments in appropriate cases. We hope that this method would enable us to so develop the unity of left, democratic and secular forces, leading to the formation of central and state governments which will be under the control of the worker-peasant masses. This, if it comes about, will be the beginning of India's transition to socialism and ultimately to communism.

#### PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The generation of Indian communists to which this writer belongs embraced communism when the Communist International was in existence. The Communist Party of India then was a section of the International. The latter however was dissolved in 1943. All subsequent efforts to have some way of international consultation amongst fraternal parties, such as the founding of the COMMINFORM, the bringing out of a journal of International Communism, the periodical holding of international communist conferences etc., ended in failure.

Today, therefore, there is no guiding centre for Marxist-Leninists either in the formal or informal sense. Each fraternal party, on its own, decides its line of action suited to the concrete conditions in that



particular country. There is however need for contacts, exchanges of views, between one fraternal party and another and among groups of parties with a view to developing solidarity of action in common movements. This is all the more necessary now, since, after the surrender of the Soviet leadership to American imperialism, the latter attempts to impose its economic and political domination over the whole world. While there is no question of a guiding centre for the world communist movement, proletarian internationalism continues to operate in the form of solidarity of every fraternal party for the struggles undertaken by its sister parties.

#### DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

This again is one of the heritages of the Communist International which has been subjected to distortions. Centralised leadership on the basis of inner-party democracy, effective leadership of the party centre based on inner party democracy—these are the two elements of democratic centralism. Like many other things however, the integral connection between these two concepts has been distorted in practice. The centralised leadership began to grow at the expense of inner-party democracy. Of late, however, a systematic struggle is being unleashed to reestablish inner-party democracy which however would not operate at the expense of the centralised leadership.

We may now sum up the discussion : recent developments not only in the Soviet Union and the East European countries, but throughout the world communist movement have made it inevitable on the part of Marxist-Leninists throughout the world to have a second look at the fundamental concepts of Marxism-Leninism which unfortunately have been distorted in practice. There is, at the same time, need to guarantee that the 'second look' would not be at the expense of, but by way of developing, the basic premises of Marxism-Leninism—class struggle, the leadership of working class in progressive movements, proletarian internationalism and the variegated ways of building socialism in various countries.

SUVIRA JAISWAL\*

## *Semitising Hinduism : Changing Paradigms of Brahmanical Integration*

The view of Max Weber<sup>1</sup> that Hinduism is not a religion in the western sense of the term, as the concept of 'dogma' is missing from it, continues to be a central point of discussion in the debate over Hinduism. It is often argued that Hinduism as well as Buddhism are not religions but ways of life.<sup>2</sup> The concept of religion as it is understood in the west involves the notion of exclusive truth but this is not the case with Vedic, brahmanical, Buddhist or Tantric systems, where what counts is the category of lineage, affiliation, cult, tradition, etc., rather than any dogma. It is asserted that orthopraxy and not orthodoxy is the operative concept and in fact there are no 'true religions' in India.<sup>3</sup> However, such statements representing the Christian theological view-point may hardly be regarded as adequate from a social-anthropological perspective, as this means the denial of the universality of religion. On the other hand, religion is counted among the universal categories of culture and it is argued that in the past there has never been a society without religion.<sup>4</sup> In our opinion, if in modern societies beliefs and prescribed doctrines are given greater importance than the ritual, it is because of the receding social role of ritual, which in pre-modern societies acts as a tool for social cohesion and social control. In modern societies these aims are achieved through other methods, and religion becomes more and more a matter of individual concern.

However, in Hinduism orthodoxy is to be proved in the realm of ritual and social behaviour albeit qualified by caste and region, but there is no such insistence in the realm of ideas and beliefs. This has led Professor Heinrich von Stietencron to argue that Hinduism is not one religion but an association of religions, such as Vaishnava religion, Shaiva religion, Smarta religion and so on.<sup>5</sup> But such fragmentation would amount to equating 'religion' with 'sect' or 'cult'. Surely, the con-

---

\* Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

cept of 'religion' is wider and while it provides space for the existence of a number of sects or cults within its fold, it is distinguished by certain normative moral codes and perceptions which embrace almost all areas of life and reveal its cultural unity. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of the forms and perceptions of the divine, it is the unifying pattern of socio-religious relations which provides Hinduism its essential unity<sup>6</sup> and establishes its claim to be identified as a religion.

We may elaborate this point further. Hinduism shows a remarkable flexibility in assimilating all kinds of and even contradictory religious and philosophical concepts. The co-existence of prehistoric forms of worship such as that of the sacred tree, animals, anthills, etc., along with the highly complex world-view of Vedanta or Samkhya is not merely a question of long continuities and toleration of other view-points. Its roots lie in the development of a hierarchical social structure to which Brahmanism provided ideological support by denying the equality of men in this world even in theory. Thus it was easy to countenance divergent customs and beliefs as long as their practitioners could be fitted into the mosaic of social hierarchy in which power and purity went hand in hand in opposition to those who were dependent and impure.<sup>7</sup> The system evolved through the centuries in specific historical conditions; and its beginnings are embedded in the ecology of the Aryan cattle-keepers, who had developed two distinct classes of specialists, the warriors and the priests.<sup>8</sup> The former specialised in cattle-raids and thus increased the cattle-wealth of their tribes and the latter claimed to do so by securing the blessings of the gods through their specialisation in the sacrificial ritual. Thus the separation of the *brahma* (priestly) and the *ksatra* (warrior) elements and the superior status of the former, which Dumont<sup>9</sup> explains in terms of the religious mentality of the Indians, is in fact a continuation of the tradition of the pastoralists, which feature was not unique to Aryans and has a perfectly rational explanation.<sup>10</sup> India has had a continuous history for thousands of years and as such has carried the weight of long traditions, but this does not mean that it has remained static. While maintaining the semblance of continuation it has made significant transitions and transformations in the spheres of ideology and social organisation in response to changing material—which includes social—conditions.<sup>11</sup>

Thus our definition of Hinduism takes an integrated view of Hindu beliefs and practices and regards the Hindu social system not only as an underpinning providing support to the edifice of Hinduism but as its important constitutive element. Such a perspective is sometimes criticised on the ground that it involves conflation of Hinduism with the social organisation of the Hindus and goes against the autonomy of religious studies by making the study of religion 'entirely encompassed within the study of society.'<sup>12</sup> As an alternative, Brian K. Smith proposes to define Hinduism as '*the religion of those humans who*

create, perpetuate, and transform traditions with legitimising reference to the authority of the Veda.<sup>13</sup> He finds the thematic definitions of Hinduism which lay emphasis on certain key concepts such as the doctrine of transmigration, *karma* and *dharma* as quite unsatisfactory as these do not enable one to differentiate between Hinduism and other Indic religions, such as Buddhism or Jainism, which also share these concepts. On the other hand, he also rejects the views of those<sup>14</sup> who give the caste system a central place in their definition of Hinduism on the ground that 'within the discipline of academic and humanistic study of religion there is a difference between religion and the social structure it legitimises' and 'Hinduism clearly entails far more than caste.'<sup>15</sup>

However, in our opinion the so-called 'tolerance' of Hinduism and its amorphous, all-inclusive character cannot be understood unless the social structure of those who came to be known as 'Hindu' and were regarded as believers of 'Hinduism' is taken into consideration. For, the unifying and identifying factor was provided by the institution of caste which had the power to communicate or admit an individual or group and not acceptance or rejection of any moral or philosophical doctrine.<sup>16</sup> There is much truth in the remark of Louis Dumont that in India all that appears to be social is in fact religious and 'all that appears to be religious is in fact social'.<sup>17</sup> In a way Brian K. Smith makes a concession to this fact by agreeing with Wilfred Cantwell Smith that there is no Hinduism apart from the Hindus and incorporating this idea into his definition of Hinduism. But his insistence that all Hindus call upon the authority of the Vedas to legitimise their doctrines and practices and hence '*legitimising reference to the authority of the Veda*' is definitive of Hinduism will not bear deeper scrutiny. There have been movements within the fold of Hinduism which have rejected not only the authority of the brahmanas, a point Brian K. Smith is willing to concede, but also that of the Vedas. For example, the Lingayats, who constitute an important Shaivite sect, not only rejected the authority of the brahmanas and ritualism but also rejected the Vedas. The *Chennabasavapurana* speaks of an incident in which the Lingayats, in order to humiliate a Vedic scholar had the Veda recited by the dogs.<sup>18</sup> Within the fold of Srivaishnavism, the Tarril sect of the Tegalai too renounced the Veda.<sup>19</sup> If later a section of the Lingayats claiming to be *Shuddha* or 'pure' Virashaivas began to seek legitimation from the Veda, it was because like all other protest movements originating as a reaction to brahmanical orthopraxy and caste inequities the Lingayat movement too failed to establish a fraternal community devoid of caste distinctions and developed a parallel caste system with the Ayyas (Acharyas) or Jangama priests at the top.

Smith's argument that the caste system is not exclusive to Hindus only in India and followers of other religions in India such as the Buddhists, Jains, Muslims and Christians too have caste divisions is

not quite valid. For whereas in the non-Hindu Indian communities the system of castes is an aberration, a survival among converts from Hinduism, retained and fostered by the continuation of earlier patterns of social relations even after conversion, in Hinduism caste is central. Not only does it have religious sanction but it has provided its *reason for existence*. The religious pluralism evinced by Hinduism is a consequence of the brahmanical integrative process which allowed freedom of belief and worship but insisted on conformity in praxis, which alone was crucial for the maintenance of social hierarchy. This does not mean that doctrinal issues have been non-existent. These have been discussed and debated in various schools and sects of Hinduism and even define its *sampradayas*, but it is impossible to establish a criterion of orthodoxy applicable to all Hindus on the basis of doctrinal principles derived from a canon or scripture.

However, Brian K. Smith puts forward an interesting reason for making his definition of Hinduism centre on the legitimising reference to the Veda. By doing so, he explains that Hinduism ceases to be totally different from the Western religions which are rooted in a fixed canon like the Bible or Quran. Thus he wishes to avoid the general orientalist approach of viewing Asian religions as 'wholly other' and 'exotic'. In the process, he over-valorises Vedic metaphors in later texts ignoring the changes in the structure of brahmanical beliefs and practices. He provides Hinduism with a canon which, unlike the Bible or the Quran, is not read or reinterpreted by the believers but is used only as a category for creating orthodoxy. He admits that Hindus 'appear' to use only the 'outside' of the Veda, oblivious to what is 'inside'.<sup>20</sup> Such arbitrary semitisation of Hinduism is an epistemological necessity for Smith's discourse, but it does little justice to the textual evidence and to the historical process through which Hinduism evolved in post-Vedic times. One could very well argue that the attempt of Brian K. Smith constitutes Orientalism in the reverse; for separating the religious from the social is alien to Hindu tradition. The very term *dharma*, generally translated as 'religion', has both religious and social dimensions in indigenous usage.

Moreover, although it may not be historically correct to say that the concept of a Hindu religion evolved as a result of confrontation with Christianity, the religion of the colonial rulers in the nineteenth century,<sup>21</sup> we shall not be wrong in asserting that confrontation with Islam, another Semitic religion, introduced a cultural and religious dimension into the term Hindu, which originally had a geographical meaning. It seems to have been used in a negative sense in early medieval Persian sources to denote indigenous peoples following a non-Islamic religion and was accepted by the people themselves as interaction with the Muslim ruling class led to a growing awareness of differences in religious and cultural practices. It has been pointed out<sup>22</sup> that the Persio-Turkic culture dominated the court of Indian Muslim

rulers who regarded it a matter of prestige to claim Iranian connections. In times of peace the interaction between the Turks and the indigenous population would lead to a cultural synthesis and appropriation of the behaviour pattern of the new ruling class, but in a situation of political antagonism and socio-economic tension the feeling of being 'the other' would be intensified generating an awareness of a separate identity. Destruction and desecration of brahmanical shrines by some Muslim rulers, even if done more for political expediency than from religious conviction, would naturally create a feeling of unity among all those communities which regarded these places as sacred and strengthen the notion of a shared tradition. The idea of a Hindu religion in contradistinction to Islam is found in the *bhakti* poetry of medieval saints such as Kabir and Dadu and is illustrated clearly in the 'Hindu-Turk Samvad',<sup>23</sup> a poem of the Maharashtra saint Eknath, who lived in the sixteenth century. The poem shows the Hindu castigating the Turk on the ground that although both 'Hindu' and 'Musalman' are God's creation, the Turk has to catch a Hindu and make him a Muslim. The Turk, on the other hand, ridicules the Hindu for his adherence to caste rules, image worship and belief in the Vedas and Purānas. Later in the same region the poet Bhushana too speaks of the long-standing enmity between the Hindu and Muslim religions (*dina*) and credits Sivaji and Chatrasala Bundela with having preserved *svadharma* and *Hinduani*.<sup>24</sup> Such sentiments even if expressed by a court poet suggest the development of the concept of Hindu *dharma* under external stimulus.

Of course, the *Hinduani* and Hindu *dharma* of Bhushana's conception was a typical caste notion which referred to the authority of the Vedas, the Puranas and the Smritis and laid stress on growing a *choti* and wearing the *janeyu* (*yajnopavita*). Political rivalry and loss of royal patronage must have provided favourable ground for the assertion of antagonistic cultural traits among the disaffected sections of the nobility and the priestly class. But there was no attempt to merge either vertically or horizontally the fragmented identities of indigenous communities by invoking a communal or religious issue. It is rightly held that the ideology of communalism is a modern phenomenon. In any case, as many of the Indian Muslims were converts from the lower castes, the Islamic community too did not present a monolithic whole. It has been argued<sup>25</sup> that the caste hierarchy was beneficial for the ruling classes, as it allowed the land-holding peasant to have cheap labour and craft services from the depressed menial castes in the petty mode of production and thus created greater surplus to be mopped up by the rulers, whether Hindu or Muslim. Hence there is no attack on the caste system even for the purposes of proselytisation in medieval Muslim sources. On the other hand, brahmanised rulers of the early medieval period often claimed to be the protectors of the *varna* system and regulated its functioning

through the office of the *dharmadhikari* held by a learned, *kulina* brahmana. The role of the ruling authority in this regard had become so conventional that even the Muslim rulers and British officers of the East India Company were sometimes appealed to to adjudicate in caste disputes.<sup>26</sup>

The brahmanical paradigm of social integration was well established. It operated through the *varna* ideology. The alien and marginal peoples were incorporated into the network of castes without doing any damage to their internal kin-structure, customs, belief-systems, etc., and they attained a status commensurate with their socio-economic condition. Endogamy along with hypogamy had characterised the *varna* differentiation from its inception in the later Vedic times. The principle emerged not from racial exclusiveness or certain irreducible notions of purity/pollution<sup>27</sup> but with the widening of social distance between the dominant and subservient communities. This is clearly indicated by a study<sup>28</sup> of the process which led to the crystallisation of priestly groups into an endogamous brahmana *varna* towards the end of the Rigvedic period. Endogamy was buttressed by the growing strength of patriarchy<sup>29</sup> and proved to be a fitting tool for hierarchical expansion. The agriculture-based communities of the age of the Buddha appropriating the forest lands of the hunters and foodgatherers denounced them as impure and polluting and this is for the first time in historical sources that we come across the notion of pollution inhering in certain communities. Gradually this led to a shift of emphasis in the *varna* theory from 'function' to 'purity of descent' and explication of the notion of *varnasankara*,<sup>30</sup> which was again an argument in favour of endogamy. The brahmanical paradigm of social integration was flexible enough to allow the absorption of influential chieftainly or priestly lineages of tribal origins into *kshatriya* and brahmana castes, but the majority of the tribal groups being economically and culturally backward inflated the rank of the *sudras* and in early medieval times the disparities in certain regions were so steep that the concept of a *panchama* (fifth) *varna* or *vārnetaras* (outcastes) who were lower than the *sudras* was floated. We have shown elsewhere<sup>31</sup> that caste ideology has not remained static. It has undergone important modifications in different epochs adapting itself to changed material conditions. But the integrative principle remained hierarchical legitimising social inequality. It is noteworthy that the *Devala Smṛiti*<sup>32</sup> which tries to meet the challenge of Islam and prescribes expiatory rites for the reassimilation of those men and women who were forcibly made to live with the *mlecchas* and partake of the forbidden food, does so within the framework of the *varna* rules.

The situation changed in colonial times. It is held that the introduction of western education made a powerful impact on the minds of the Indian intelligentsia who were exposed to the ideas of social equality, democracy and humanism, and this made them acutely aware

of the evils prevailing in their own communities. The activities of Christian missionaries put the Hindus on the defensive but the orientalist discovery of the civilisation and culture of ancient India gave a boost to their sagging ego and generated the revivalist-reformist movements of the nineteenth century. These sought to identify an original unitary version of Hinduism consisting of humanistic, universal principles and denounced the caste system, child-marriage, the custom of *sati*, etc. Thus, whereas Ram Mohun Roy referred to the authority of the Upanisads, Dayananda Saraswati gave a call to go back to the four Vedas. Both rejected idolatry and Puranic rituals.

The main contribution of Ram Mohun Roy lies in encouraging a rationalistic world-view and the uplift of women. Although he opposed caste distinctions, he did not entrust anyone but a brahmana with the duty of reciting the Vedas and the Upanishads in his Samaj. The activities of the Brahmo Samaj were mainly confined to the educated middle class; it did not involve the masses. However, Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was more forthright in this respect and he attempted to unite the Hindus by rejecting the existing caste system and transforming the polytheistic Hinduism into a monotheistic, 'pristine' Vedic religion, which was organised and proselytising. Thus he provided a new paradigm of Hindu integration both internally and externally relating it to the acceptance of a belief system.

It is generally held that the Arya Samaj was a thoroughly indigenous movement and its doctrines owed nothing to the west.<sup>33</sup> In this respect it represents an anti-thesis to the Brahmo Samaj which had tried to combine what it considered best in the western and eastern ideologies. Nevertheless, Jordens<sup>34</sup> is quite right in his view that in formulating his unique doctrine that the four Vedas are revelations containing the eternal wisdom of god and the only authentic source of uncorrupted Arya Dharma, Dayananda was decisively influenced by the dogma of Protestant missionaries and Muslim theologians that God has revealed himself in a book. No doubt there had been a long tradition of regarding the Vedas as eternal knowledge revealed by god in some Indian philosophical systems such as Yoga and Nyaya<sup>35</sup> but Dayananda's exclusive emphasis on the hymns to the exclusion of the rest of the Vedic literature was a novel innovation and he went far beyond the orthodox traditional belief in asserting that the Vedic Samhitas were the epitome of all knowledge, physical and metaphysical.

Dayananda's concept of what constitutes the Veda, his unorthodox interpretation of the Samhitas, his theory of creation and the myth of an egalitarian, universal golden age in pre-*Mahabharata* times, all these were significant ideological tools for denouncing evil social customs and idolatrous beliefs and practices as later accretions, and



these prepared the ground for a new national and communal awakening. He could also reject the pluralistic interpretations of Hinduism and explicate the exclusive truth of the Veda bringing it in accord with reason and available scientific knowledge. He is criticised for his 'narrow exclusivism', which made him condemn all other religions of the day, Jainism, Islam and Christianity; but it is to be kept in mind that he was reacting to the 'selective Christianity consciously adapted for colonial consumption' by the Christian missionaries and the attack of Muslim maulavis in a hostile competitive atmosphere created by colonial rule. Following the typology of religion as schematised by Bruce Lincoln<sup>36</sup> one may argue that a narrowly puritanical attitude is typical of the 'religion of resistance', which defines itself in opposition to the 'religion of the status quo'. In this case, traditional Hinduism represented the 'religion of the status quo' which was promoted and upheld by the orthodox Hindu elite, who manipulated the Hindu authority structure and felt sufficiently threatened by the anti-ritual and anti-caste teachings of Dayananda to denounce him as the destroyer of the Vedas. His translation of the Vedas into Hindi to make them accessible to all without any discrimination of caste was a revolutionary step in the ambience of the nineteenth century. It was a direct attack on the special privileges of the traditional elite, sapping the foundations of their authority. Dayananda's support came largely from the 'marginal intelligentsia', which could include some members of the traditional elite displaced by colonial rule, but largely consisted of a new elite arising out of the middle stratum which had benefited to some extent from the processes of modernisation and was becoming aware of the need for social reform and self-respect.

Jordens has shown that the founding members of the Arya Samaj at Bombay (1875) were moderately educated persons engaged in trade or clerical services and other professions. He also gives the caste composition of these members and points out that the leading members of the Samaj belonged mostly to the trading castes which had recently acquired prosperity through the development of cotton trade and industry. The number of brahmana members too was not inconsiderable, but they mostly belonged to the lower strata of school teachers and clerks and not to the high status brahmana intelligentsia. Twenty-eight per cent of the brahmana members were students; and brahmana membership declined over the years. Later when Dayananda shifted his scene of activity to Punjab, there too, the majority of his supporters came from the khatri caste, which had benefited in recent decades through education, professional jobs and trade, but in the traditional status hierarchy held an intermediate position ranking below the brahmanas and the aristocracy. In western U.P. the movement had a broader base as the modernising process had affected a more diversified section of society; but the trading classes continued to

preponderate. Thus it was basically a movement of the literate, urban classes, winning a large number of adherents among those castes which had a particular reason to be dissatisfied with the traditional taboos and hierarchical aspects of the caste system.

Dayananda denied the validity of *jati* divisions and only spoke of the *varnas*, which in his view were secular categories, a rational division of labour into four functional classes based originally on merit and qualifications of the individual but later degenerating into hereditary castes. He aimed at making his Arya Dharma a universal religion based not on birth but on the acceptance of its general principles. The ten fundamental rules of the Arya Samaj, although couched in very broad terms, nevertheless emphasise the missionary spirit of the movement in laying down that one should not remain satisfied with one's own progress but should make an active effort to destroy ignorance and uplift all. The movement from the beginning aimed at proselytisation. Dayananda reinterpreted the *suddhi* ritual and made it into an instrument of conversion to Hinduism redefining its essence from birth to belief. Thus in theory now the whole world could be converted to the Arya Dharma.

Nevertheless, the actual cases of *suddhi* in the life-time of Dayananda were of a few apostate Hindus who sought readmission to the Hindu faith. The *suddhi* movement gained momentum in the early twentieth century when communities and not just individual members were targeted for conversion to meet the threat of Christian missionary activities and increase the numerical strength of the Hindus who had been registering a decline in the Census reports. Some Rajput groups such as the Malkhans, who had been converted to Islam but retained a good deal of their ancestral faith, were persuaded to return to the Hindu fold, but it was mainly the outcastes or low caste groups among whom the *suddhi* movement made a greater impact.

Thus, the consciousness that political battles can no longer be fought out among the elites alone and numbers mean access to power and economic opportunities brought into focus castes which were regarded hitherto as outside the Hindu *varna* system or too lowly to be taken into reckoning. Their conversion to Islam or Sikhism does not seem to have aroused much resentment or a sense of loss in the earlier centuries, but the political situation had changed now. It is said that in order to stop their conversion to other faiths and forge closer links with the wider Hindu community the Arya Samaji propagandists adopted the same methods as those of Christian missionaries and achieved a good deal of success in Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh where large numbers of low caste communities such as the Rahtias of Jullundhar and Lahore districts, Meghs of Sialkot region and Odes of Multan and the Chuhrahs of Khalapur (north-western Uttar Pradesh) the Shilpakars of Kumaon and to some extent the Jatavs of Agra city and Nonia's of Senapur were converted to the Arya Samaj. Kenneth W. Jones writes

that this changed the social composition of the Samaj in the Punjab. 'The educated elite, the urban vaishya and brahmanical castes became a minority within the movement, although they maintained their leadership, if not unchallenged, at least undiminished.'<sup>37</sup>

It is not without significance that the *suddhi* movement continued until the time of partition but petered out after independence. Moreover, it failed to evolve a specific 'Arya' social identity restructured on the principles of social equality and secure the permanent adherence of low castes to Arya Samaj, even though in many cases the initiative for *suddhi* had been taken by the leaders of these castes. In an interesting study<sup>38</sup> of the Arya Samaj and the low castes Ursula Sharma explores the reasons why in spite of its anti-caste ideology the Arya Samaj was not able to proselytise and win permanent attachment of the low castes. She argues that whereas the urban initiators of the *suddhi* campaigns wanted to rejuvenate the Hindu society and establish a truly 'national Hindu culture', the aims of the members of the low castes were more specific. They wished to improve the status of their caste through a process of Sanskritisation generated by their association with the Arya Samaj. This created a paradox. The ritual symbols reinterpreted by the Arya Samaj for abolishing status hierarchy were understood differently by the low caste audiences who adopted them in the hope of obtaining a higher status. When this did not happen they moved towards a more secular and political action involving themselves with political parties and forming bodies like the Scheduled Caste Federation for political purposes. Further, the Arya Samaj did not have a rural base. It could provide only moral support to the low castes in their efforts to raise their status in the villages but could not be very effective once its missionaries withdrew from the locality to their urban base.

However, we may point out that even in urban areas the Arya Samaj has not been able to evolve a distinct social identity; and staunch Arya Samajis often lament its being engulfed into the vortex of Hinduism. The real reason for the failure of the Arya Samaj to establish a separate identity lies in the fact that it could not abolish the caste identity of its members, which fact reduced it to being a mere reformist sect of Hinduism. Hinduism has infinite capacity to tolerate any kind of theology as long as its caste structure remains unharmed. No doubt the Arya Samaj helped in weakening the notions of caste hierarchy, commensal taboos, etc., but the ground for such changes in the caste society was prepared by the processes of industrialisation which delinked the caste and occupation and made rules against interdining and intermixing difficult to observe. There was no such inherent contradiction with regard to the observance of the rules of endogamy which had the force of a long tradition and continued subordination of women. However, in rural areas where industrialisation has not made much impact, the earlier structural relations are bound to prevail and

these could not have been abolished merely through the ideological propaganda of the Arya Samajis. The use of traditional symbols such as the vedic *homa*, the sacred thread, etc., for divergent and contradictory purposes by the low caste men on the one hand and the Arya Samaji missionaries on the other highlights an essential aspect of the problem: despite the professed objective of establishing a casteless society the Arya Samaj could not move out of the endogamous caste structure and its attitude towards the low castes remained paternalistic rather than egalitarian. Hence the programme of evolving a fraternal brotherhood of the Aryas was reduced to the consolidation of a Hindu communal identity, basically an upper caste agenda.

Nowadays, the votaries of Hindutva are floating another model of integration, that of 'Rama-Bhakti' which is supposed to be the rallying point for Hindu integration and simultaneously a litmus test for one's loyalty to the nation. But this has little to do with history or the problem of social integration of Hindu communities. It is frankly acknowledged by the leadership of this movement that this is to ensure a proper place for the Hindus in the public realm. And it is no less significant that the symbol chosen for this purpose is one who is famous for upholding the patriarchal norms and the *varna* system, going to the extent of beheading a sudra for practising austerities and aspiring for heaven, as this act of transgression of *varna* duties had resulted in the premature death of the son of a brahmana in his kingdom.<sup>39</sup>

This paper was presented at a Seminar on 'Hinduism: Religion or Civilization?' organized by Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi, 2-3 December 1991.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Max Weber, *The Religions of India*, trans. by H.H. Gerth and Don Martindale, Free Press, Glencoe, 1958, p. 21.
2. R.C. Zaehner, *At Sundry Times*, Faber and Faber, London, 1958, p. 20; *Hinduism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966.
3. Fritz Staal, in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of Fire Altar*, Vol. II, Berkeley, 1983, p. 2.
4. Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Doubleday, New York, 1954, p. 102, quoted in Syed Hussein Alatas, 'Problems of Defining Religion', *International Social Science Journal*, XXIX, No. 2, 1977, p. 214.
5. Henrich von Stietencorn, 'Hinduism: On the proper use of a deceptive term', in Gunther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, Manohar, Delhi, 1989, pp. 11-28.
6. Madeleine Biardeau, *Hinduism, The Anthropology of a Civilization*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.
7. F.A. Marglin, 'Power, Purity and Pollution: Aspects of the Caste System Reconsidered', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S. II, No. 2, 1977, pp. 245-70; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. VI, 1981, pp. 1-63, reprinted in R.S. Sharma

- (ed.), *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Delhi, 1986, pp. 41-108. Page numbers of the latter are mentioned in the following references.
8. Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981.
  9. Louis Dumont, *Home Hierarchicus*, Delhi, 1970.
  10. Suvira Jaiswal, 'Varna Ideology and Social Change', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 19, Nos. 3-4, March-April 1991, pp. 41-48.
  11. Ibid.
  12. Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 11, fn. 22. Also see Joseph M. Kitgawa, 'The Making of an Historian of Religions', *Criterion*, Vol. 7, 1968.
  13. Brian K. Smith, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
  14. According to R.C. Zaehner, Hinduism is as much a social system as a religion. See *Hinduism*, p. 8. Also see S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, Macmillan, New York, 1973.
  15. Brian K. Smith, op. cit., p. 11. Italics as in the original.
  16. The early Puranas often counterpoise Vedic and Tantric without regarding the latter as a 'heresy' practised by those who were outside the pale. It is recommended that women and sudras may worship Puranic deities through the Tantric mode of worship as the Vedic mode of worship is open only to the male members of the upper three varanas. See Suvira Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaishnavism*, 2nd edn., Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1981, p. 152 ff. What is involved here is the notion of hierarchy of religious levels which is a reflection of the empirical reality of social hierarchy and not the other way round.
  17. *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Delhi, 1970, p. 16.
  18. *Cennabasavapurana*, Ch. LVII, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1868, p. 193.
  19. Louis Renou, *The Destiny of the Veda in India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1965, p. 2. Among other sects rejecting the authority of the Vedas Renou mentions the Mahanubhava sect of Maharashtra and Sahajiyas of Bengal. According to Ramakrishna, 'the truth is not in the Vedas, one should act according to the Tantras, not according to the Vedas, the latter are impure from the very fact of being pronounced, etc.' (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 3).
  20. Brian K. Smith, op. cit., p. 217.
  21. J. Laine, 'The Notion of "Scripture" in Modern Indian Thought', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 64, 1983, pp. 165-79.
  22. Muzaffar Alam, 'Competition and Co-existence: Indo-Islamic Interaction in Medieval North India', *Itinerario*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1989, p. 55.
  23. Quoted in N.K. Wagle, 'Hindu-Muslim Interactions in Medieval Maharashtra', in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, pp. 55-56.
  24. See for example *kavitta* nos. 420 and 421 in *Bhusana Granthavali*, edited by Visvanatha Prasada Misra, Varanasi, 3rd edn., *samvat* 2026, p. 209.
  25. Irfan Habib, *Interpreting Indian History*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Shillong, n.d., pp. 20-21; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History', pp. 49, 56, 71-72.
  26. *Ibid.*, p. 89; also see H. Fukuzawa, 'State and Caste System (Jati) in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Kingdom', *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 32-35.
  27. Suvira Jaiswal, Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 38th Session, Bhubaneswar, 1977.
  28. See Suvira Jaiswal, 'Stratification in Rigvedic Society: Evidence and Paradigms', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. XVI, forthcoming issue.
  29. Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History', pp. 42-44, 73-89.

30. Ibid., pp. 70-73.
31. Suvira Jaiswal, 'Varna Ideology and Social Change', pp. 41-49.
32. *Devalasmriti in Smrtinam Samuaccayah*, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series No. 48, Poona, 1929, pp. 85-89.
33. J. Laine, op. cit., p. 173.
34. J.T.F. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati: His Life and Causes*, OUP, Delhi, 1981.
35. L. Renou, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
36. Bruce Lincoln, 'Notes towards a Theory of Religion and Revolution', in Bruce Lincoln (ed.), *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution*, Macmillan, 1985.
37. *Arya Dharma, Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab*, Manohar, Delhi, 1976, p. 214.
38. Ursula Sharma, 'Status Striving and Striving to Abolish Status: The Arya Samaj and the Low Castes', *Social Action*, Vol. 26, July-September 1976, pp. 214-35.
39. This refers to the story of Sambuka narrated in the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, Gita Press edn., Uttara Kanda, sarga 75-76.

## *Individualising History: The 'Real' Self in The Shadow Lines*

The so-called 'new' writing in English, comprising Salman Rushdie and the Stepanians, has met with a shower of accolades from various quarters within the country. Running through the valorisation of these novelists by the dominant Indo-Anglican critical tradition is the insistence that they manifest new and liberating forms of engagement with contemporary India. It is in this context that I wish to re-read Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*<sup>1</sup> to analyse the extent to which his novel, working within the realist mode, engages with questions of domination/subordination, resistance/hegemony, in a context in which asymmetrical power relations continue between metropolis and former colony. To do so, I will examine Ghosh's representation of 'India' in the novel to evaluate the extent to which it accounts for the disruptive and contradictory socio-political pressures that mark the contemporary Indian metropolis.

The most important reading of *The Shadow Lines* from such a perspective has been by P.K. Dutta, 'Studies in Heterogeneity: A Reading of Two Recent Indo-Anglian Novels'.<sup>2</sup> According to Dutta, by identifying cultural heterogeneity as an epistemological location, a novel such as *The Shadow Lines* 'realises the possibility that the experience of overlapping heterogeneities itself can be counterposed to the violent sub-continental insistence on cultural purity and communal division'.<sup>3</sup> This paper takes as its starting point the larger theoretical implications of Dutta's argument—that to effectively negotiate the mechanisms of power and control within which post-colonial identities are constituted, the post-colonial needs a history which can account for the diffusion and heterogeneity of origins rather than the idea of monolithic, 'authentic' cultural past. Such a liberating concept of the post-colonial 'self', moreover, is not something which exists outside discourse and therefore needs to be recovered. Rather, this 'self' has to be fashioned out of an understanding of the multiple socio-historical processes which shape contemporary Indian culture.

---

\* Department of English, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

'Culture' as an autonomous realm of discourse emerged in Western Europe in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. In an age of unprecedented socio-economic change, when England was transformed from a predominantly agrarian society to a predominantly industrial one within a short span of forty years or so, the Romantics proposed 'culture' as the realm which preserved the values of a mythical, organic, pre-industrial past.<sup>4</sup> 'Culture' was now privileged as the seat of transcendental values such as Truth and Beauty to which imaginative literature provided direct access. This rarefied realm was, moreover, proposed as being immediately available only to an elect minority endowed with the power of 'creative intuition' which enabled it to be spiritually integrated with the 'Idea' lying behind appearances. But, as Malini Bhattacharya argues, this was a new image of the literary artist and it evolved out of specific historical conditions:

What seems to be 'transcendence' or an absence of any logical connection with the dominant trend in society, may still be explained by reference to the various contradictions that we find existing within the social fabric at a particular phase in history. . . [Literature] can be upheld as a symptom, at the cultural level, of the contradictions within the bourgeois social order.<sup>5</sup>

It was at this historical moment that the idea of the 'creative genius' emerged. The reconciliation of the disruptive tendencies within society was then accomplished through the spiritual vision of the literary artist, in Art or Literature. Consequently, the ideological conflicts within society were to be resolved not in the material world but at the level of contemplation. The new idealist conceptions of 'art'/'literature'/'culture' significantly took shape in the face of nascent proletarian militancy. Simultaneously, the making of history was taken completely out of human hands and attributed to a mystic Providence.

It was also at this historical moment that realism emerged as the dominant mode of writing in Western Europe. The connection between the class-character of the new concept of literature and the emergence of realism as the dominant mode of writing can be best established through an analysis of the realist conception of the 'self'. The 'self' presented by realism is that of a coherent, autonomous individual whose *cogito* is the locus of all meaning. The narrative logic of the realist novel is then structured towards the self-realisation of the autonomous individual. However, as J.M. Bernstein observes

The 'self' which comes to self-recognition in the *cogito* is not the 'self' whose narrative we have been following; indeed it is not the kind of 'self' for whom self-knowledge and the question of identity could even be at issue. . . The universality of the *cogito* is



guaranteed by its ubiquity and anonymity—a transcendental self.<sup>6</sup>

This 'transcendental self' is then placed in relation to History, God or Art which function as the 'objective' categories for its self-realisation. The most important ideological function of realist fiction, as Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey have argued, is the endless display of autonomous subjects who are the origins of their actions.<sup>7</sup> The focus of the realist novel, they suggest, then shifts to the opposition between the universal 'self' and various essentialist 'objective' categories. Such a subject object opposition, they argue, performs the function of bourgeois ideology by displacing class-conflicts within society onto a socially autonomous realm in which they are then imaginatively resolved. Within the specific context of post-colonial India, the endorsement of the nineteenth-century West European definition of the 'self' further implies the reiteration of a discourse generated by the pressures of the West European metropolis. It cannot therefore produce a historically analytical and yet culturally specific definition of the contemporary Indian metropolis. In fact, as Partha Chatterjee has suggested, the endorsement of the West European bourgeois epistemology in the Indian context signifies the continuing relationship of dominance between metropolis and former colony.<sup>8</sup>

Having outlined the larger political implications of the production of essentialist identities in the contemporary Indian situation, I will now analyse the self-representations of some of the major characters in *The Shadow Lines* (the hero/narrator, his mentor Tridib, his cousin Ila and his grandmother Tha'mma) in order to see if they challenge these continuing unequal relations of power. I will use Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' to analyse the subjectivity produced through *The Shadow Lines*. Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning enables us to consider literature 'as a manifestation of the concrete behaviour of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes'.<sup>9</sup> The entire 'narrative' of *The Shadow Lines* is constructed from the perspective of the hero/narrator. I wish to suggest that by ultimately shifting the focus of his narrative, through the narrator, from a materialist interpretation of the Indian nation to the relation of the transcendental 'self' with the essentialist category of 'sacrifice' (extinction of self), Ghosh's novel is perhaps unable to offer any radical redescription of the post-colonial situation.

Tha'mma is undoubtedly the most important mother-figure in Ghosh's novel. The nationalist ideology, suggests Partha Chatterjee, was based on a selective appropriation of western modernity by a separation of culture into a series of distinct, mutually reinforcing dichotomous spheres—the material and the spiritual; the world and the home; the masculine and the feminine. On the question of the

social position of women, the nationalist ideology legitimised conservative social attitudes and patriarchal forms of authority.<sup>10</sup> Writing about the nationalist ideology of 'motherhood' in particular, Jasodhara Bagchi has observed that it took away from women all real powers (such as economic independence or decision-making authority within the family) by creating a myth about their spiritual strength and power. As a married woman, Tha'mma internalizes the nationalist construction of the domesticated 'Indian wife'. Once widowed, however, the narrator shows that Tha'mma challenges in significant ways the extremely passive role constructed for 'widowhood' by the nationalist ideology. Tha'mma, who is educated, now decides to be economically independent. By doing so, she challenges the dominant stereotype of the ideal 'Indian woman' in two major ways. The first is on account of her having a Western education. Discussing the issue of Western education for women, Tanika Sarkar points out:

Drain was not simply a matter of financial worry. It was repeatedly linked up with a more serious moral concern: that of corrupting the sources of indigenous life. . . . The woman and the peasant as 'ideal' patriotic figures, had to be particularly careful by insulating themselves against the pretensions of this false knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

The material consequence of this idealisation, Sarkar suggests, was that by proscribing access to higher education to lower-class men and to women as a group, the new avenues of employment opened by the colonial restructuring of the indigenous administrative system could be monopolised by the upper-class males. The second aspect of the dominant stereotype that Tha'mma challenges is by choosing to take up employment rather than accepting the financially dependent, domesticated role of the ideal 'Indian woman'.

The consequences of her economic independence, the narrator shows, is that Tha'mma holds a position of considerable real power within her family. For instance, in a context which justifies child-bearing and nurturing as the only legitimate social roles for women, Tha'mma is able to exert her choice regarding the number of children she will have (*TSL*, p. 129). Similarly, the narrator recalls that it was Tha'mma who defined the rigorous work ethic of their family rather than his father (*TSL*, p. 4). The consequence of such real powers is that unlike the ideal woman who is expected to constantly negate her 'selfhood' in the service of the controlling patriarchs, Tha'mma develops a tremendous sense of self-pride in her achievements. The narrator says, . . . she [Tha'mma] talked to me more than she did to anyone else. . . and I could guess a little. . . of the wealth of pride it had earned her [to refuse her rich sister's help] (*TSL*, p. 33). However, her inability to acknowledge this self-pride shows Tha'mma as *interiorising* the dominant stereotype of 'womanhood'. Hence, Tha'mma insists that she

took up employment only as a 'sacrifice' for her son's career. It is also this sacrificial complex constructed around the stereotype of the 'Indian woman' which cannot permit Tha'mma to acknowledge the fact that the entire project of 'rescuing' her uncle, Jethamoshai, is essentially an act of self-indulgence on her part. The narrator reconstructs Ttha'mma's visit to her childhood home:

My Grandmother starts because she has forgotten all about her uncle . . . she reminds herself that she has a serious duty to perform, that she hasn't come all this way merely to indulge her nostalgia—she hates nostalgia, . . . it is a waste of time. (TSL, p. 298)

The notion of an autonomous 'selfhood' for women was viewed by the nationalist ideology as a degenerate form of self-indulgence, as being directly opposed to the 'true' feminine identity characterised by self-sacrifice and suffering.<sup>13</sup> The Nehruvian ideals of austerity and nation-building were thus not gender-neutral categories but involved rigidly structured social divisions of labour. For men, making good use of their time involved as Tha'mma suggests, 'The business of fending for oneself in the world' (TSL, p. 14). Consequently, Tha'mma's dislike of both Tridib and her brother-in-law, Shaheb, stems from her conception that they are not able to maximise the prospects of their respective careers. For women, making good use of time involved primarily their being good enforcers of the patriarchal order. The defining norm here was the myth of the 'sexual purity' of women which condemned as dangerous and immoral the female sexuality that did not serve the patriarchy. Thus Tha'mma is violently repulsed by what she imagines to be Ila's sexual promiscuity, seeing it as an immoral form of self-indulgence. The narrator, is, however, unable to see the underlying ideological connection between Tha'mma's rigorous work-ethic and her code of morality. He interprets her attitudes instead in terms of *ahistorical values* and says that she was 'too passionate a person to find a real place. . . in [his] late-bourgeois world'. (TSL, p. 92)

That Ghosh challenges the cultural essentialism reinforced by the nationalist ideology, as by Tha'mma, is evident through the narrator's reconstruction of the second major female character of the novel, Ila. Through Ila, Ghosh is able to problematise the conception of 'Indianness' in the post-diaspora period. The post-decolonisation era in India has witnessed large-scale emigrations to Western Europe. Consequently for people like Ila, 'nationality' and 'ethnicity' are problematic categories. Having been brought up in various metropolises, mainly London, Ila inhabits very different social roles from those of Tha'mma. She attempts to actively imitate the high-culture of Western Europe. Consequently, Ila finds the social roles

prescribed for the 'Indian woman' at Calcutta inadequate. The narrator recalls an episode at the Grand Hotel:

Listen Ila, Robi [Ila's uncle] said, . . . girls don't behave like that here. What the fuck do you *mean*? She spat at him. I'll do what I bloody well want. . . Here there are certain things you cannot do. That's our culture; that how we live. (TSL, p. 88)

However, the narrator suggests that Ila's mode of self-fashioning does not allow for any effective engagement with the problems of race and culture in the post-decolonisation era. It leads rather to a pathetic dependency on, and subjection to, the metropolitan culture, as represented in Ila's married life where her husband Nick used her primarily as a means of financial support and then as one among many other women with whom to have sexual relationships. Vivek Dhareshwar's analysis of V.S. Naipaul's novel is applicable here to Ila's self-fashioning as it also leads to a 'double exclusion'.<sup>14</sup> While Ila actively dissociates herself from the community at Calcutta, the metropolis in turn rejects her. As the narrator suggests, even Ila's leftist sympathies become merely another means by which she attempts an illusory identification with the metropolis through the character of Allen Tresawsen (Nick's uncle). The narrator poignantly reconstructs Ila's positions as he learns the 'truth' about Ila's fabricated story of Nick rescuing her doll, Magda:

I [the narrator] tried to think of Ila walking back from school alone through the lanes of West Hampstead. . . Ila who in Calcutta was surrounded by so many relatives and cars and servants that she would never have had to walk the length of the street. . . Ila walking alone because Nick Price was ashamed to be seen by his friends, walking home with an Indian. (TSL, p. 76)

In contrast to Ila and Tha'mma, Tridib's mode of self-fashioning is presented by the narrator as the privileged position which can enable an effective engagement with the material situation within which post-colonial identities are constituted. Like Ila, Tridib's most dominant desire is also shown to be the effort to negate the entire network of his social relationships:

He [Tridib] did not want to make friends with the people he was talking to, and that was perhaps why he was happiest in neutral impersonal places. . . (TSL, p. 9)

Unlike Ila, however, the narrator says that Tridib's desire to negate his sociality arises not from the stereotypical colonial fantasy of being appropriated into the metropolis, but has to be read as an effort to *challenge* imposed modes of knowledge and rearticulate the post-colonial self:

I [the narrator] tried to tell Ila and Robi about the archaeological Tridib . . . The Tridib who said that we could not see without inventing what we saw, so at least we could try to do it properly. . . . He had said that we had to try because the alternative wasn't blankness—it only meant . . . we would never be free of other people's inventions. (TSL, p. 31)

Tridib's perspective, the narrator suggests, can critique the dominant cultural stereotypes as it presents to the post-colonial subject a choice to re-narrate his/her 'selfhood' according to his/her desires:

Everyone lives in a story, he [Tridib] says, my grandmother, Lenin, Einstein. . . they all lived in stories because stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which one you chose. (TSL, p. 182)

The narrator here is unable to account for the critical limitation in Tridib's perspective—that the process of elaborating a new post-colonial identity involves *social action* rather than being merely a product of an individual choice made autonomously of society.

The narrator further suggests that Tridib's perspective can challenge the dominant stereotypes as it permits one to *imaginatively reconstruct* times and places and thus enables one to historicise his/her context. Such a historicity generates avenues for the post-colonial subject, for instance the narrator, to resist the kind of dependency generated by a perspective such as Ila's that only engages with the immediately *physical* present. The narrator's implication here is that Tridib's idea of identity formation can successfully challenge the uneven power-relations. He elaborates Tridib's concept of 'freedom':

[Tridib] did know. . . how he wanted to meet her [May] as a stranger in a ruin . . . He wanted them to meet in a place without a past without history, *free, really free*. (TSL, p. 114, emphasis added)

Thus, 'freedom' for Tridib involves a total negation of the social past. What is significant here is that 'history' for Tridib is considered as a homogeneous and monolithic entity. Consequently for him, a re-definition of post-colonial identity involves *not a re-evaluation* of the biases of neo-nationalist historiography, but a *negation* of the situation in which the post-colonial finds himself/herself. For Tridib, therefore, the re-narration of the post-colonial context has finally to be done at the level of *individual imagination*.

Tridib's mode of self-fashioning is crucial in the text as the hero/narrator himself constantly attempts to 'see' through Tridib's eyes:

Tridib had given me [the narrator] worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with. She [Ila] who had been travelling around the world ever since she was a child could never understand what those hours in Tridib's room had meant to me, a boy who had never been more than a few hundred miles from Calcutta. (TSL, p. 20)

Through the narrator's endorsement of Tridib's perspective Ghosh seems to contest at one level the dominant ideology of the post-colonial metropolis which proposes the conscious 'self' to be the locus of all meaning. The narrator is presented instead, on numerous occasions, as actively trying to reconstruct the multiple determinants of his subjectivity:

I sat on the . . . camp bed and looked around the cellar. Those empty corners filled with remembered forms, with the ghosts who had been handed down to me by time: the ghost of the nine-year-old Tridib, . . . the ghost of the eight-year-old Ila. They were all around me, *we were together at last*, . . . the ghostliness was merely *the absence of time and distance*. . . (TSL, p. 181, emphasis added)

Such a perspective allows Ghosh to account for the *social determinations* of the 'self'. The author can now address the question of subjective attitudes as they are overdetermined by a specific cultural context. Thus Ghosh explains the differences in Tha'mma's and Tridib's attitudes to time, for example, as resulting from their differential class-positions. Tha'mma's obsessive work ethic which can only sanction a notion of time to be used in order to further one's career interests typifies an Indian petit bourgeois concern. In contrast, Tridib's tendency to 'waste' his time signifies a life of leisure and a class-position which is free of immediate economic pressures, that is, the traditional elite classes of India. The narrator recounts:

For her [Tha'mma] time was like a toothbrush: it went mouldy if it wasn't used. . . . That was why I [the narrator] loved to listen to Tridib: he never seemed to use his time, but his time didn't stink. (TSL, p.4)

Similarly, the narrator is presented as being aware of the fact that the unreciprocated adoration that he has for Ila is largely a factor of the relation of dominance by which the cosmopolitan life-style available to an elite Indian minority operates on the life-styles available to the lower-middle and other lower-classes (TSL, p. 112). The narrator is also conscious that his fascination for Tridib has largely to do with the fact that as a child, Tridib provided for him the only (imaginary) access to Ila's kind of lifestyle about which he could only fantasise in his little flat.

Such a perspective also enables Ghosh to address through the narrator the crucial question of attitudes and lifestyles as they are specifically related to the access to English education in present-day India. The narrator clearly suggests that English education, in the present situation, is actively implicated in sustaining the uneven socio-economic privileges between the ruling elite and the masses of the Indian population:

It was that landscape [at Garia] that lent the note of hysteria to my mother's voice when she drilled me for my examinations. . . I [the narrator] knew perfectly well that all it would take was a couple of failed examination to put me. . . in permanent proximity to that blackness: that landscape was the quicksand that seethed beneath the polished floors of our house. (*TSL*, p. 134)

The narrator is also able to account for the fact that English education in contemporary India is not only an index of class-position but is also related to the hankering after a particular metropolitan/cosmopolitan culture which results ultimately in stimulating the West European economy. The narrator recalls Tha'mma describing the patterns of consumption of this class:

It's not just *money*. . . It's things: it's all the things money can buy—fridges like the one Mr. Sen's son-in-law brought back from America, . . . colour T.V. s and cars, caluculators and cameras. . . (*TSL*, p. 79)

From such a position, Ila's efforts to mime the high-culture of Western Europe or the narrator's own fascination for Ila, may be read as resulting from the cultural imperialism perpetuated by English education in India.

While on the one hand Ghosh seems to be contesting the Cartesian notion of the autonomous 'self' as the origin of meaning, yet on the other, the narrator's emulation of Tridib's mode of self-fashioning leads the author to finally reinforce the ideology of bourgeois individualism. The narrator is presented as reflecting the preoccupation with a transcendent, private interpretation of significance. His ultimate goal is shown as being the attempt to achieve self-realisation in isolation, by discovering the transcendental meaning of Tridib's death:

[W]here there is no meaning, there is banality, and that is what this silence [of the Indian media regarding the 1964 riots of East Pakistan] consists in. (*TSL*, p. 218) . . . .

So that is why I can only describe at second hand the manner of Tridib's death. I do not have the words to give it meaning. (*TSL*, p. 228)

Subsequently, the narrator realises the impossibility of achieving self-realisation:

He gave himself up; it was a sacrifice. I [May] know I can't understand it. . . for any real sacrifice is a mystery.

. . . I [the narrator] was grateful for the glimpse she had given me of a final redemptive mystery. (TSL, p. 252)

That the narrator's search is a direct result of his endorsement of Tridib's idea of 'selfhood' is evident: his unsuccessful search for a metaphysical significance echoes Tridib's own inability to understand the real meaning of the lives of Allen Tresawson and his friends:

Most of all he [Tridib] would despair because he could not imagine what it would be like to confront the most real of their realities [of imminent death] . . . The fact that they *knew*. What is the colour of that knowledge? Nobody knows . . . Because there are moments in time that are not knowable. (TSL, p. 68, first emphasis mine)

Like Tridib, the final stability of the hero's 'self' also arises from his inability to comprehend Tridib's 'sacrifice'. The narrator's search for a metaphysical ideal therefore finally results in the narrative shifting to the subject-object opposition by which realist fiction performs its ideological function. The focus of the narrative is, in the end, on the relation of the transcendental 'self' with the transhistorical category of 'sacrifice'.

The narrator's endorsement of Tridib's perspective also implies that his concept of re-articulating the post-colonial situation contributes to the reinforcing of the de-historicising, idealist bourgeois philosophy:

[T]he sights that Tridib saw in his imagination were infinitely more precise than anything I [the narrator] would ever see. He said to me once that one could never know anything except through *desire, real desire*, . . . that carried one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and places. . . to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (TSL, p. 29, emphasis added)

Hence, the terms by which the author proposes to articulate a liberating, alternative model of history, ultimately show a complicity with the essentialisms of bourgeois philosophy. The narrator proposes to rewrite history through the ahistorical quality of 'real desire' which by enabling a kind of Keatsian negative capability will allow him to become imaginatively integrated with the object of introspection.

The consequence of the narrator's endorsement of an empiricist-idealist philosophy is that contrary to his own assertions, there is an



underlying continuity between the positions endorsed by Ila and Tha'mma and his own perspective. The narrator recounts that Tha'mma has not been able to realize her ideal of 'freedom,' the middle-class dream of 'the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power. . . ' (TSL, p. 79). He also shows Ila's active efforts to be appropriated into the West European culture which continues to impinge on the post-colonial along an axis of power. As with them, his own desire to be free is also ultimately ineffectual. The narrator's recollection of Robi's ideas of freedom may be read as describing his own position:

Free. . . You know, if you look at the pictures on the front pages of the newspapers at home now—in Assam, . . . Punjab, Sri Lanka, Tripura—people shot by terrorists . . . and the army: . . . you will find somewhere behind it all that single word, *everyone's doing it to be free* . . . why don't they draw thousands of little lines, through the whole subcontinent.. . ? What would it change? *Its a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage. How can anyone divide a memory?* (TSL, pp. 246-47, emphasis added)

Freedom is itself rejected as being an illusory socio-political condition. What is significant is that like Tridib's concept of 'history', 'memory' for the narrator signifies a homogeneous, monolithic essence outside discourse. Consequently, any attempt at re-reading the selectivity of the dominant neo-nationalist historiography, as manifested in the Indian media-reports of the riots in East Pakistan, is categorically proscribed as 'madness'. The narrator considers the violence of various anti-establishment struggles as also finally being futile because of an original collective memory which is beyond re-interpretation. Thus, while he suggests that Tha'mma's conception of the 'nation' as a profound horizontal comradeship, 'a pool of blood' (TSL, p. 78); is inadequate, he himself also describes the complex and fragile material pressures which mark the subcontinent in terms of certain *ahistorical values*:

It [the fear generated by the communal riots] is a fear that comes of the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent. . . It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the sub-continent from the rest of the world—not language, not food, not music—it is this *special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of war between oneself and one's image in the mirror.* (TSL, p. 204, emphasis added)

What therefore defines the contemporary Indian nation according to the narrator is a 'special quality of loneliness'. Hence all the characters can be seen as articulating a similar underlying concept of 'freedom' as a Platonic Ideal which has to be individually and imaginatively realised. Using 'freedom' as one of the defining motifs

of the text, Ghosh's definition of 'India' seems to foreclose a materialist interpretation of the pressures which shape present-day India.

The motif of 'travelling' in the text perhaps elucidates most clearly the author's implicit endorsement of the logocentric philosophy that prevents him from critical engaging with the material conditions of his culture. The two sections of the novel derive their titles from the two most crucial journey to England around which all other episodes are structured—Tridib's journey to England in 1939 and Tha'mma, Tridib and Robi's journey to Dhaka in 1964. The narrator signifies, however, that Tha'mma's journey is not to be understood merely in terms of physical movement:

Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go to and away from and come back to, and my grandmother's [journey] was not a coming or going at all [but] a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (TSL, p. 153)

The narrator indicates at one level here that the Absolute on which language is grounded is essentially one that has been 'assumed', that is, discursively constructed. Therefore, Tha'mma's logocentric search for a 'pure', homogeneous national identity in the irrevocably fragmented post-partition context has to end disastrously with the death of Jethamoshai. The narrator implies that Tha'mma's illusory search results from her inadequate perception of the nature of politics in the post-colonial context. This perception is further shown as being reinforced by the Indian media as also by the conventional historiography, that is, a perception perpetuated by the dominant ideology which causes people to believe that distance is a corporeal substance:

I [the narrator] had to remind myself that they [the people of India and Pakistan] were not to be blamed for believing that there was something admirable in moving violence to the borders. . . They had drawn their borders, *believing. . . in the enchantment of lines, hoping. . . the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland*. What had they felt. . . when they discovered that they had created not a separation but. . . the irony that killed Tridib! The simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines. . . *When each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free—our looking-glass border*. (TSL, p. 233, emphasis added)

The narrator says that he too had earlier believed in these deceptive precepts. The implication is that by using Tridib's concept of travelling, of 'using [one's] imagination with precision' (*TSL*, p. 124), The narrator has been able to effectively represent the contemporary Indian situation. Hence he says that unlike Tha'mima or his father, he has realised that maps are mirages and that Dhaka and Calcutta are essentially mirror-images of each other. But as he himself acknowledges elsewhere, such a symmetry only exists in the event of a war (*TSL*, p. 233). Thus, he is unable to account for the very different socio-political conditions of the two nations and formulates instead a definition of India characterised by a 'special quality of loneliness'. So, the narrator's own concept of 'travelling' also does not contribute to an accurate reconstruction of the material pressures which mark present-day India. By offering a contemplative interpretation of India, the narrator remains a subject to the ideology that fosters the illusion that individuals are world-makers.

While I have a more detailed analysis elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> what I hope to have established in my discussion is that Ghosh's self-representations are unable to register the many-layeredness of the cultural-historical formation of post-colonial India. The specific, complex and contradictory socio-economic conditions which shape class and gender identities in contemporary India are transformed in Ghosh's interpretation into certain universal values. This transformation performed by *The Shadow Lines* prevents it from offering a liberating and radical re-description of the post colonial context.

I wish to thank Dr. Tejaswini Niranjana for her comments on earlier versions of this article.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, Ravi Dayal Publishers, Delhi, 1989. All subsequent references to this work, abbreviated as *TSL*, are indicated in the essay itself.
2. P.K. Dutta, 'Studies in Heterogeneity: A Reading of Two Recent Indo-Anglian Novels', *Social Scientist*, 18 (3), March 1990, pp. 61-70.
3. *Ibid.*, p.70.
4. For an extended discussion see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973.
5. Malini Bhattacharya, 'Utilitarianism and the Concept of Authorial Autonomy in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17(31), 31 July 1982, pp. 49-57.
6. J.M. Bernstein, *The Philosophy of the Novel: Luckacs, Marxism and the Dialectics of Form*, Thompson Press, New Delhi, 1984, p. 180.
7. Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', in *Untying The Text*, edited by Robert Young, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1989, pp. 81-99.

8. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986, p. 11.
9. Cited by Vivek Dhareshwar, 'Self-fashioning, Colonial Habitus, and Double Exclusion: V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*', in *Criticism*, Winter 1989, p. 77.
10. Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, edited by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 232-52.
11. Jasodhara Bagchi, 'Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (42-43), 20 October 1990, pp. WS65-71.
12. Tanika Sarkar, 'Nationalist Iconography: Images of Women in Nineteenth-Century Bengali Literature', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 (48), 21 November 1987, pp. 2011-14.
13. Prabha Krishnan, 'In the Idiom of Loss: Ideology of Motherhood in Television Serials', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 (42-43), 20 October 1990, pp. WS103-15.
14. Dhareshwar, op. cit., p. 80.
15. Ajanta Sircar, 'Imaging Metropolitan Subjectivity: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*,' unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, English Department, University of Hyderabad, 1991.

## *Myth as a Response to History*

Jo Labanyi, *Myth and History in Contemporary Spanish Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

The main focus of the study under review is on myth as a response to history as reflected in the works of a number of Spanish novelists, who have endeavoured to relate myth to the specific historical context of Spain in a variety of ways. The book also questions the premise of the American school of myth criticism which proposes the universal scheme of symbolic archetypes in total disregard for the specificities of national history. Other issues dwelt on in the book deal with fiction as a form of mythification in its correlation with real world.

The study is of immense importance especially because a multitude of internationally recognised Latin American novels published during the 1960s and 70s caught the attention of world readers in the English language, and thus noteworthy fiction by Spanish novelists was underplayed and overlooked, though it reflected in a remarkable manner the period of the war and its aftermath. Indeed, these narratives bring into focus a large body of literary production which had remained obscured in the closed Spanish society under Franco.

Nearly a century ago Karl Marx had observed that the knowledge of the history of Spain in his time had been totally inadequate because 'instead of viewing the strength and skill of these people in handling provincial and local administration the historians have drawn from the sources of their court histories'.

Spain is a land of small regional divisions. Every town is a centre of intense social and political activities. As it used to be in the Middle Ages, a person's allegiance is first to his native place and only later to his country. Therefore, it is rightly said that Spain is a conglomerate of small and mutually hostile or indifferent republics, which means that geography has always determined the pattern of political polarisation in Spain. In 1931, when a shortlived realignment of regional and political forces took place, the Popular Front became vic-

---

\* Department of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi.

torious in the elections. However, the army sprang into action to undo the popular verdict which was stoutly resisted by the working masses and a civil war broke out. This soon took the form of a fierce class struggle between reactionary land-owners and revolutionary workers and peasants. Perhaps no-one remained neutral in the Spain of those days; many changed sides midway due to transformations in their perception and commitment. Naturally in such circumstances writers, painters, artists and filmmakers could not have remained silent spectators. As was expected they played an important role during and after the Civil War.

The present study of six Spanish novels of the post-war period should also be seen in this background. Jo Labanyi, while selecting the texts seems to have taken into account the diverse affinities of the novelists studied here even though in the introduction he has sought to justify the selection on the basis of the availability of English translations of the novels.

The author has devoted one chapter each to the following novels: *Tiempo de Silencio* (1961) by Luis Martín Santos, *Volveras a Región* (1967) by Juan Benet, *Si te dicen que caí* (1973) by Juan Marsé. These chapters present a detailed analysis of the texts as also demonstrate the existence of fiction as mask, echo and corruption. The other three novels—*San Camilo 1936* (1969) by C.J. Cela, *Reinvindicación Del Conde Don Julian* (1970) by Juan Goytisolo and *La Saga/Fuga de J.B.* (1972) by Torrente Ballester are clubbed together in the last chapter as the use of myth by these writers is different and the texts provide 'release from history'.

Labanyi initiates his discourse on myth in Spanish novels by providing, in Chapter I, a brief but comprehensive survey of the evolution of western theories on myth. He does not go into the question as to what myth signified in pre-literate societies. This has naturally led to ignoring the fact that myths were born as narratives in early stages of history wherein fantastic images (myth) created in those times were attempts to capture and explain different phenomena of nature and society. Labanyi begins his discourse from the Renaissance which saw the revival of classical mythology: by alluding to myth contemporary writers got situated in the universal tradition, which in turn amounted to sanctioning the imposition of European culture the world over. It has been correctly argued in the study that the notion of the universality of myths combined with the time expansionism of the Renaissance was used to legitimise the theories of empire resulting in cultural imperialism.

In the romantic period, when myth was transformed into an appeal to the roots or return to the origin, it greatly hampered the process of crystallisation of future historical writings. The development of nineteenth-century historiography has been discussed here in the light of the debate around the difference between the historicist view that

the present is caused by the past, and the mythical understanding that history is divorced from origins. The author argues that the central romantic myth of *Paradise Lost* and its view on history as 'an expulsion from the *Garden of Eden*' incorporates the idea of 'irreversible change' into history. The Hegelian dialectic suggesting three stages: Thesis—Antithesis—Synthesis, finds a parallel in *Paradise Lost*—Fall—Utopia. Thus the linear view of history henceforth is changed to the cyclical vision, whereby history should fulfil the goal of reintegration.

The growth of liberal individualism in this period gave rise to the romantic expression of myth as national soul reflected in the 'natural' 'unspoilt' *Volk*. This in turn encouraged the discovery of the unknown and the natural and the colonisation of the non-European world was the obvious option to unite them to the 'civilized'.

Labanyi has also discussed the late nineteenth century theories underlining the 'savage' aspect, as suggested by James Frazer in the *The Golden Bough* and by Wagner in *Ring*. They welcome destruction as a prerequisite to regeneration. The Nietzschean understanding of myth, i.e. 'a creative form of dreaming' and 'willed forgetting' gave a big jolt to the European man's 'superiority' based on classical mythology, which in turn forced them to adopt what they had called 'barbarism'.

The Freudian theory of Oedipus complex dealt the final blow to the romantic notion of origin and naturalness. Freud finds 'primitive man' within the civilised one. He explains that 'myth takes us back to the infancy of civilisation' because 'infancy represents original state prior to repression' and that 'civilisation began when man learnt to repress the infantile urges'. These observations of Freud gave a new direction to the whole debate on history and myth.

Though Freud did not apply his theory of the unconscious (psyche governed by the pleasure principle as opposed to the reality principle) to the study of myth, it greatly contributed to the sustenance of interest in myth by modernist writers of Europe. However, the modernists misread the Freudian text because, as has been pointed out by Labanyi, 'If writers and painters insisted on the "illogical integrity" of the symbolic language of the unconscious, Freud was concerned with rationally analysing its underlying meaning.' The modernists ignored reason which was progressive and adopted the unconscious which was regressive and retrograde. Labanyi has also discussed the Jungian quest of myth in comparison with that of Freud. He argues that Jung's anti-politicism and Eliad's (Romanian scholar of comparative religion) anti-historicism laid the basis of the American School of Myth Criticism, according to which the universal archetypes of myths are dissociated from history—a view totally unacceptable to Labanyi as evident all along in this study.

Further, the book throws some light on the Structuralists who readily accepted the position taken by Myth Criticism as it suited

them to undermine the role of a creative individual—a product of the socio-historical environment which would serve as a handy tool to obliterate history through the 'death of the author'.

The most significant part of this chapter is the pithy commentary on Levi-Strauss, the French anthropologist and noted theorist on myth. Levi-Strauss gave a new turn to the whole debate on myth as he, while agreeing with the dramatic notion that 'myth represents a universal structure of human mind' also pointed out that myth is a result of reason and not of irrational perception. This view turned the romanticist notion topsy-turvy. The Poststructuralist/Postmodernist critical theories of literature are greatly influenced by this view. Levi-Strauss explains that 'myth creates a binary opposition which requires mediations'. He stresses the fact that no society lives outside history 'but some try to annul the effects of history and others make the historical process a mainstay of their development.' Levi-Strauss' Marxist antecedents help him in understanding the relationship between history and myth whereby 'myth is response to real contradiction'. However, he soon deviated from his initial view in his formulation that the contradictions exist in the human mind and myths only take into account things of logical order and not of natural.

The study has also commented upon Barthes' structuralist analysis of myth which considered it as synonymous with ideology. Myth is not 'primitive' according to him but it is an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie to falsify the reality through powerful technology and mass media.

This chapter serves as an analytical prelude to the issues raised in this book in subsequent parts. The application of theoretical constructs discussed in this chapter to analyses of the literary production of post-war Spain makes it an essential component of the whole body of the book.

'Myth and Nationalist Spain' is the title of the second chapter which deals with the ideological and political formulations of the Spanish fascist movement (Falange Espanola). An indepth analysis of Francoist ideologies shows that they believed that their country's 'history was an inauthentic deviation from 'origins' and their ideology will 'save' the nation by taking it back to its original naturalness—to the roots.

The study has very correctly pointed out that this notion should not be taken as a borrowing from German or Italian fascism, rather its origin lies in Spain itself and strangely enough in the philosophical ideas of the Generation of 1898 and Ortega y Gasset.

Though the Generation of 1898 claimed to have followed scientific deterministic principles, as Labanyi states,

... Their suggestion that national character is determined not by history but by the 'fixed original essences' of geography and race is



identical to the romanistic view of naturalness (*volk*) which emerges from the teluric forces. Reducing history to geography and biology leads to the reduction of culture to nature and accepting the man-made as immutable and given. Similarly, Ortega's main contribution to Nationalist ideology was his stoic austerity concept which legitimised all actions of the fascist governance. As is known, Ortega y Gasset talked about national destiny—i.e. 'a suggestive project for communal living in which the entire nation is faithfully committed to its essential destiny'.

This chapter in a well argued manner brings home the point that an understanding of the role played by myth in shaping the Spanish events is of great relevance for all of us.

The detailed analysis of the novel *Tiempo de Silencio* (Time of Silence) by Martin Santos sets out to lay bare the mythical constructs of the nationalist ideology.

The novel is one of the first to break with the traditional realist style of writing and has done so impressively by resorting to the use of myth. Though myth is central to the text, its use is ironic, therefore it cannot be called a mythical novel.

Martin Santos, psychiatrist and a leading figure of the Socialist Party (PSOE, now the ruling party in Spain) possessed all the necessary skills to write a work of political content. The novel functions at two levels—one, it analyses human behaviour in all its contradiction, and two, it criticises in a most hard-hitting manner the so-called radical philosophy of the Generation of 1898, Ortega y Gasset and Unannous for having given credence to fascism by their retrograde ideas. Both the aspects have been brought into the text by the use of language replete with satire, irony and parody. All the de-naturalising techniques of writing resulted in bringing to the centrestage the politics which was behind a mask. The mask did not conceal the reality but the darkness and silence, thus the truth was revealed only by exposing what was not ('Spain is a country which is not Europe', often repeated in the text).

This novel, above all, is anti-mythical as it takes a linearly progressive view of history embodied in historical change. It also analyses the specific period of Spanish history wherein the time is central to the discourse, man is condemned to time which produces insecurity in him and compels him to return to the fixed mythical category of origins. The phenomenon of regeneration is also missing here.

Labanyi has categorised various ways in which myth had been used to demythify a reality.

The stoicism proposed by Ortega and Unannous is reflected in the behaviour of the main protagonist Pedro who resorts to 'El destino fatal' in order to justify the disasters faced by him. Most of the

characters of the novel are influenced by the 'sour grapes' appeal—for example, the narrator in the novel insists that 'the judgement must be suspended—till those who now laugh sadly learn to look a medicine destiny in the eye.'

This innate stoicism of the Spanish peoples was explained by Menendez Pidal, then President of the Royal Academy, as a Roman inheritance which was directly linked with the democratic tradition. By 'democracy' he meant not the right of people to make law, but their right to implement it, meaning thereby a popular support for the ruling clique. The novel reflects their pronouncements by parodying episodes related with the ruling class.

The so-called inherent stoic character and democratic spirit of a Spaniard is compounded by anarchic individualism, also professed by Ortega which finally suited the authoritarian governance. Martin Santos's critique of Ortega is depicted in the satire of his speeches. The 'select minority' of the literary cafe, a divine elite, is shown as the 'divine police', and social classes are divided in what Labanyi calls 'vertical hierarchy'. This was the real state of Franco's time.

The Spanish craving for racial purity (historical obsession) has been aptly parodied in the novel. The study has also thrown some light on the use of the Oedipus myth which is explained by Labanyi as the incestuous relationship which points to the concept of return to the womb, i.e. the origin. This eminently enjoyable novel not only exposes the falsity of myth and mythification but it also shows how fiction used as mask to deny history could be unmasked by using irony which unveils the wall of words built by man.

Juan Benet, an intellectual and a close friend of Martin Santos, wrote his novel *Volveras a Region* in 1967. In this novel also myth is central but its use is ironic. It takes civil war as an allegory of devastation. Therefore, this period of history is treated as a medium for carrying out 'an inquiry into the problem posed by temporality'. Like Martin Santos Benet also suggests that time produces insecurity in man, that is why he turns to fixed myth. But unlike *Tiempo de Silencio* he characterises history as destruction. However, for Benet history as progressive and linear is also another kind of mythification. The falsehood is exposed by Benet through irony, though here irony is not constructive as in Martin Santos but deconstructive in the Derridean sense, because reason is not able to reconstruct the world destroyed by war, it only helps in discovering the illusory nature of the opposing categories which are dividing the chaos and order. It looks as if Benet is close to Levi-Strauss; however, his constant inquiring into and questioning of mythical and historical thought leads to a vacuum and makes his argument sceptical.

Juan Benet has recognised the fact that he was influenced by the reading of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. The legendary mystical figure of Numa represents nature and it appears in constant conflict with

civilisation. Numa rules a sort of underworld called Mantua which is inhabited by dead souls; whoever crosses the boundary perishes. The events develop in consonance with changes in nature, i.e. 'Spring brings prosperity whereas autumn brings an end.' Here also regeneration is absent. Labanyi stresses, 'Numa's function is to naturalise disaster by confirming destruction as a natural law.'

Benet's own position concerning the civil war is wavering and sceptical. It is not surprising that his literary writings reflect the contradiction of his own person. Numa's interference with Spanish history for him represents a final destruction, whether it is Visigoths, or Carlist Republicans. They never regenerate, rather their fate is finally sealed. This argument as forwarded by Labanyi does confirm the Benetian scepticism. Labanyi further elaborates that since Benet is anti-romantic he does not fall in line with the nationalists who reject the present in preference to the past in order to 'save the nation from decadence'. However, Benet is also anti-mythical; that is why he does not agree with the Republicans who reject the traditional morality representing the past. He denounces the reformers as they, for him, amount only to the same future utopia. Benet is in agreement with the youth as they want to go on living only in the present. He feels that the Republicans who abolish linear time are in for a bigger disappointment as linear time is unavoidable, it being accompanied by despair notwithstanding.

The scepticism of this writer leads him to write a fictional work on the trail of the disappeared past. It is mythical as well as historical and that is why it tries to collect the remnants from the past years. It tells what 'did not happen', that's why Labanyi rightly states that it works like an echo of a suppressed past. 'All it can rescue is that debris left behind by the devastation of war which was nothing else but loss.'

Juan Marse, author of the third novel *Si te dicen que caí* (*If They Tell You I Have Fallen*) is completely different from the previous two. Marse belongs to the same generation and the time covered by his novel is the post civil war period up to the 1960s (the so-called beginning of the economic boom). But he belongs to the working class and is less educated—a fact clearly reflected in his novel.

Marse does not draw mythical models from classical mythology but from comics, movies, pulp fiction, etc., which fill with fantasies the lives of the dispossessed strata of the society. The creation of a coloured imagination of the people offers a parallel or counter-culture, which in turn produces a clash in paralysed society after the defeat of the Republican forces. Thus Marse erases the dividing line between myth and history because he shows how two conflicting forces of the same historical reality are governed by myth of one sort or another. This novel, unlike the other two, attempts to prove that myths do not serve only as throwbacks, rather they are 'creative and forward-looking'.

The text has made an impressive use of the oral tradition. The working class characters narrate through *aventis* (stories told orally). Labanyi suggests that the *aventis* help the writer to achieve his two objectives, one, he tells the history of Spain based on 'popular memory' as opposed to the official Francoist version of events; thus the collective memory is shown to be more authentic and correct; secondly, the opinion, will and position of the dispossessed is represented and reflected in all its diversity. It is interesting to note that movies, fiction, comics shown or read in Franco's Spain were either censored American productions or were modelled in distorted ways on old Spanish classics. In all the cases the 'myth of the hero' was central. Marse has captured in his novel the entire gamut of popular culture which sanitised the official propaganda, the Falangist symbol (boys are found urinating on it), the patriotic anthem (people falling asleep while hearing it), etc.

Marse did revolutionise the myth and its uses by proposing a popular view. This should be considered his most important contribution to Spanish literature. He created new myths and used them in novel ways to show the power of the people. However, he appears to be a contradictory personality because he blamed the right as well as the left. Labanyi draws the conclusion, '(For Marse) power lies not in truth but in its absence—power based on falsehoods of myth is necessarily corrupt, but to those born in deprivation it can provide release from impotence by creating an alternative reality that looks forward. . . .'

The last chapter, 'Fiction as Release', discusses three novel by C.J. Cela, Juan Goytisolo and Torrente Ballester. As intellectuals all of them were different in their ideological positions; they represented divergent approaches to myth, history and literature. Labanyi feels the need to club the three novels together here because they have one common point, i.e. they demonstrate how history is converted into myth. They have also used irony to subvert the official version of history; however, here through irony the spoken is not revealed, rather a counter-myth is created. The comic situation produces more laughter than reflection, thus the humour serves as a release. The novels studied earlier revealed that beneath the official mythical version of history lay the lost origin and authentic reality of the civil war and its aftermath. The three novels examined in this chapter ignore history because 'myth is more fun'. For them, as Labanyi points out, history is equated with repression and myth with liberation.

All the three novelists of this chapter have had very different influences. Camilo J. Cela has rejected the very concept of writing history. His novel gives place to the Unamuno's *intrahistoria* concept, where the historical changes were superficial as they left untroubled the 'depth of the sea', i.e. the everyday life of the common masses. This cyclical view of history leads to the famous saying that 'history

repeats itself' Cela's writings involve a lot of repetition which eventually leads to exhaustion.

Cela's anti-politicism compels him to present historical events as accidents and create mediocre or sub-average characters who are looked down upon by the novelist himself. Labanyi is right when he indicates that *San Camilo—1936* is an attempt to reduce history to absurdity and by creating confusion he has blurred the facts.

Juan Goytisolo, a novelist known to be of leftist orientation, has been greatly influenced by the historian Americo Castro, who has given a new direction to Spanish historiography, particularly in the area of Moorish history. The obsession with Arab rehabilitation in Goytisolo is very often related to his being a close associate of Americo Castro.

The novel under study makes parody central to the unmasking of reality. The parodied elements are the myths representing national character, stoicism, fatalism, etc. and have been criticised by a mock-referendum on the law of succession, various playwrights of the medieval period, etc. Labanyi argues that the historical reality in the novel is excluded and we are forced to see through 'the spectacles of the Nationalist Myth'. Since the reality could not be changed, it could only be mocked at by literary discourse. Labanyi forgets that by providing release through humour the novelist also succeeds in driving home the point regarding the rejection of nationalist morality.

Torrente Ballester had varied affiliations, both political and social. He belonged to the Galician region of Spain, and thus was greatly under the regionalist influence. He edited an anarchist paper for some time and was part of the Falange Movement also. These diverse associations created a confused writer. Therefore, he himself had said, 'the novel is a jocular exercise in both mythification and demythification—the expression of my internal contradiction.'

It is obvious from the novel that the author is on the one hand disillusioned with the Nationalist ideology which represents absolutism and on the other hand he also criticises regional leaders for their dishonesty and manipulation, though his sympathy still lies with the regional leaders. Due to this bizarre situation created by his varied affiliations he has presented two versions of all the events. Labanyi has compared Ballester's ambiguity with the Levi-Straussian notion of binary opposition—regional/centrist, plurality/absolutism. However, the novel comes out as a good satire of both the categories. Labanyi considers that 'the novel provides a postmodernist critique of the western obsession with origin'. Torrente Ballester has succeeded in exposing the political manipulation which lies beneath myth-making processes.

The study has by and large covered a vast range of different aspects: linguistic, literary and sociological, and has exposed the ulterior motives for the mythification of reality by the Nationalist ideology. Labanyi has demonstrated quite objectively the response of writers to

the specific conditions which had been obtaining in Spain since 1939. He has succeeded in showing how some writers try to reconcile with the 'nightmare of history' while others escape it and still others suffer it by perishing or surviving.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *'Exalting' the Pre-Modern*

Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, OUP, Delhi, 1992, pp. 192, Rs. 240.

In this erudite monograph, Sudhir Chandra unravels the process of the formation of social consciousness in the late nineteenth century in India, through a meticulous discussion of literary works in several languages. The significance of the document lies not merely in its scholarly treatment, but also in the quest to understand the tradition that weighs so heavily upon us in the current period, or in his own words, 'persistence of a dominant structure of social consciousness'. Chandra seeks to understand the 'world of tradition in its own terms' and sets before the English-educated Indians the task of excavating the buried 'vernacular mind'. The importance of the study cannot be over-emphasised since, as he correctly points out, what is discussed in this book 'remains the more-or-less unarticulated base of our own consciousness'.

The intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century, faced with the colonial presence and a total decay of their own society, 'betrayed moods, attitudes and tones within which were fused escapism and romanticism, idealism and realism, passive deliberation and a determined exploitation of the little space available for action'. An alien presence, politically subjugating the nation, conceived as socially superior, led, on the one hand, to a celebration of 'the liberating and egalitarian ideas brought to them by new knowledge', and on the other, the desire for independence and national pride which led to invocation of the ghosts from the past.

The complexity of the response was further compounded when faith in colonialism, despite an understanding of its exploitative nature, was coupled with the idea of a glorious past which had been mutilated by the presence of another 'alien', the Muslim. The Muslim as the other 'alien' responsible for the downfall of the glorious tradition was a stratagem, and maybe more, which obviated the necessity of an internal critique and systematic study of the past.

In a situation of colonial exploitation, oppression and cultural destruction and paralysis, the arduous task of cultural recreation and

assertion took the easy path of obliterating the distinction between myth and history. Sudhir Chandra aptly describes the process: 'The search for a counter-history was facilitated by the traditional absence of a distinction between mythology and history. So, both literary and quasi-historical classics of the past—the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas, for example—came to be seen as more than repositories of the community's myths, wisdom and traditions; they were seen as containing a history and a meaning relevant in providing the raw materials for reconstructing India's past. They were histories.'

He further elaborates: 'In nineteenth century India, though it was beginning to be made, the distinction between myth and history was minimal. It was natural even for the English-educated to consider, for example, Ram and Yudhishtir at par with Akbar and Ahilyabai in terms of their historicity.' The 'vernacular mind' that evolves in the nineteenth century, thus, is the illegitimate child of myth and history. And to the extent the contemporary intelligentsia inherits this legacy uncritically, the birthmarks still show.

Lest the conclusion sound a bit too hasty, Chandra's study provides ample material to bolster it. The dichotomy between belief and action that characterised the behaviour of educated people during the later nineteenth century (and still does), is well documented. Chandra sees this as the very structure of belief comprising opposing elements. On all matters of social reform like widow remarriage, the joint family system, etc., the protagonists of reform, in their personal lives flinch in facing the logical conclusion of their own pronouncements. This, to Chandra, means that 'within the nineteenth century Indian colonial context, the satisfaction of feeling the superiority of "tribal" socio-cultural organisation was powerful enough to subordinate many a personal frustration and tragedy.'

This ambivalence, tension and contradiction in the nineteenth century intelligentsia is seen by Chandra as necessitated by the need to maintain social equilibrium in the frontal confrontation with the alien culture of British colonialism.

The attitude of the 'vernacular mind' to the communal question more clearly demonstrates this phenomenon. Whether it is Pratapnarain, Harishchandra, Radhacharan or a host of others whose writings are quoted in great detail in the book, all of them explicitly, or implicitly, equate the Hindus/Aryas with India. Though this identification may have been done quite unselfconsciously, 'deep down it would appear, India was believed by Hindus to belong naturally to them'. Despite his critical empathy, Chandra is constrained to note: 'Hindu feelings against Muslims ranged (then) from an unstated and subtle assumption to straightforward abuse. This hostile feeling could often lurk in the dark crevices of consciousness.'



What needs to be understood in this context is the total reliance on a make-belief system that was invoked to sustain this frame of mind. Facts and history were the biggest casualties. Putting 'mythology to creative use', 'nostalgia for a past worthy of emulation, a need to respond to the oppressive colonial presence, in what appeared to be a hopeless situation, may have been the factors for substituting myth for history. That it was done is beyond doubt. Resorting to this easy method deeply embedded reliance on myth as a stratagem in the psyche of the "vernacular mind".' In Chandra's words, 'a collective amnesia seems to have marked Hindu social psychology'.

Hindu-Muslim unity was, of course, underlined for reasons of political expediency, but the Muslim was always treated as the other 'other'. As Chandra notes, 'Resentment against Muslims was more than the reflection of a need for a dark interregnum, necessary to sustain the twin myths of divine dispensation and a glorious past.' Sati, purdah, child-marriage and even the caste system were believed to have and portrayed as emerging in response to the evil Muslim rule. In one of his plays Pratapnarañ propounds the view that Sati was unknown in pre-Muslim India. The Arya Samajist leader Shraddhananda wrote: 'There was no trace of the present caste system during the Puranic age. It is a direct outcome of the advent of Muslim rule in India.'

These are not exceptions. Chandra notes, 'Like Dayanand's revivalism, the violence of his attacks on adversary religions and sects may be seen as more or less typical of contemporary Hindu consciousness.' 'This belief in the relation between Muslim rule and Hindu decline was almost axiomatic. The correlation was projected even in situations where blaming Muslims strained the limits of plausibility.' That this was real is obvious. Whether it was inevitable may sound hypothetical, to which no answer can be given with any degree of definitiveness. Sudhir Chandra does provide a few clues as to how it came to be: 'Exaggeration and fantasy were characteristic features of the popular Indian mode of perception and articulation'; the existence of sharply polemical and vituperative literature like the uninterrupted translations of *Prabodhchandrodaya* and the availability of rather anti-Muslim history texts like *Itihasatimirnashak* on which middle class Hindu youth was brought up.

Be that as it may, the question that needs to be addressed, and the importance of which Chandra is acutely aware of, is why and how the 'vernacular mind' carries this legacy un-critically to our day. The dominant intellectual discourse in this country still remains under the sway of the 'vernacular mind'. If we are wary of the ambivalence of our forebears in the present-day context, then understanding the sources of this phenomenon is as important as to build a critique of it, in order to transcend it, and not to disown it. If our consciousness, as a continuum of the nineteenth century social consciousness, is the product of an

illegitimate and easy-in-virtue relationship, let us be aware of its characteristics.

Chandra's study is an invaluable contribution for an understanding of the 'vernacular mind'. However, Chandra's degree of empathy with our ancestors also reflects in a certain measure his affection for traditional identities. This inhibits him from looking for strands of the traditional cultural consciousness that in the later period gave birth to what is generally termed as the progressive regional intelligentsia. This trend, while exalting the national identity, also sought to prune the culturally and socially backward elements of tradition. Gandhi has been viewed by 'traditionalists' or the 'vernacular mind' as belonging to this stream. Gandhi's criticism of Dayanand for his having misrepresented Jainism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism itself, his awareness of India's history of religious strife, are not taken to kindly by the 'vernacular mind'.

Chandra's lament of Gandhi having been rejected by the so-called modernists, under the sway of 'imperialist discourse', is totally misplaced. For the perplexing question, is why is Gandhi is not acceptable to the traditionalists who dominate the cultural, social and political discourse in India? An interesting corollary is, why did Gandhi want the acceptance of his blue-print from the 'modernists'? Why did he not mobilise the 'traditionalists' and swamp the rather miniscule modernist leadership of the national movement? A very tentative clue could be that even the limited critique made by Gandhi of tradition's conservative interpretation was not acceptable to the 'traditionalists' or the 'vernacular mind'.

The critique of modernity that Chandra begins with in his introduction, does not coherently fit into the structure of the book. It neither prefaces his study, nor is it its conclusion. It may at best be treated as a statement of his position. The veneration shown for the post-modern stance, in the Indian context, amounts to an exaltation of the pre-modern. Choices are a personal affair. I for one, to paraphrase Brecht, would rather not talk about good old things, but talk about the bad new ones.

RAJENDRA PRASAD  
*People's Democracy*  
 New Delhi

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Burden of Inequality*

Alia Ahmed, *Women and Fertility in Bangladesh*, Sage Publications, 1991, pp. 183, Rs. 185.

Bangladesh is a chronic case of the link between population density and poverty expressed in land hunger, low per capita income, subsistence level consumption and actual unemployment. When social welfare and health programmes have helped to bring down the death rate, Ahmed considers it relevant to focus on the fertility behaviour of the population. Rather than looking at the question crudely, Ahmed mediates it by looking at population growth within the framework of the age structure and marriage patterns of groups of women to determine fertility levels. Using comparative field areas, developed (where health and family welfare are available) and underdeveloped (where these services are absent) she shows how: (a) fertility levels have reduced in the period 1972-83 due to change in marriage age, and (b) that lower fertility is shown by the higher age groups where desired levels of fertility have been achieved. The developed area shows a total lower rate in comparison to the undeveloped area.

Ahmed has also looked at socio-economic indicators to explain changes in fertility, such as women's literacy, per capita income, life expectancy, infant mortality, age of marriage and the female labour force participation rate. In all these areas of social change and progress, Bangladesh has not even reached a threshold level, as in the case of female literacy at 60% and proportion of women never married before the age 20 at 80%. Ahmed rightly indicates that the pace of socio-economic development is too slow and therefore Bangladeshi women cannot wait. She is also critical of family planning programmes because of a lack of political will, administrative weakness and a poor network of health facilities. She poses a question that we are all familiar with: can measures to motivate people to control birth be successful when the conditions which motivate people to have fewer children have received scant attention?

Ahmed advocates 'selective intervention' to resolve the deadlock, by identifying the socio-economic indicators which are most directly

with fertility behaviour. She correctly identifies the status of women as a crucial area, and concentrates on this aspect to show how class and gender inequality has influenced attitudes to fertility, not only in Bangladesh but other LDCs as well. She however cautions that methodology remains primarily theoretical since indicators are not refined enough nor is the data sufficient to make an adequate linkage.

Policy alternatives suggested are:

1. Reduce the insurance benefit of sons by economic opportunity.
2. Improve infant health and survival.
3. Improve status of women so that ambitions regarding daughters may also develop.
4. This will have an impact on fertility regulation as well.

To look at the question of family size and fertility in cost benefit terms helps to realise the magnitude of the problem as well as the burden borne by women in poor Asian countries.

NINA RAO  
College of Vocational Studies  
University of Delhi

## OBITUARY

### *Krishna Bharadwaj*

21 August 1935 – 8 March 1992

Krishna Bharadwaj was born on 21 August 1935 in Karwar, Karnataka, the youngest child of M.S. Chandavarkar, a teacher in the local college, and Shantabai. The family shifted in 1939 to Belgaum after he joined Belgaum College, so it was in Belgaum that Krishna had her schooling. Belgaum was then, and remains today, a famous centre of classical music; from about six years of age onwards Krishna took regular lessons in singing. Her proficiency was evident very early, and her talent in Hindustani classical vocal won her trophies in major competitions by the time she was fifteen. No less a singer than Gangubai Hangal predicted a bright future for the young prodigy. For a time Krishna did in fact seriously think in terms of a musical career, but a persistent throat infection forced her to give up the idea. What the world of classical music lost, the world of classical political economy gained, for academic brilliance no less than musical talent was to characterise her career.

After her father passed away in 1952 the family moved to Bombay. A combination of scholarships and taking tuitions saw an impecunious Krishna Chandavarkar through to a first class in economics at Ruia College, Bombay. In college Krishna was extremely active both in amateur dramatics and in sports; her love for the theatre dates from those days. After completing a post-graduate degree at Bombay University with the best first (not only for her year but for several years before and after) she went on to write her doctoral thesis in transport economics, completing it by 1960.

In the same year Piero Sraffa's terse *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* was published, which Joan Robinson described as 'a double-distilled elixir' for the theorist. The elixir was heady no doubt, but difficult to absorb; leading economists have spent years of their professional life in interpreting this work and its implications. Sachin Chaudhuri, editor of the *Economic Weekly* (as it was then called), asked the young twenty-five-year-old economics scholar Krishna Bharadwaj (she had meanwhile married) to try her hand at reviewing the book. Such was the clarity and incisiveness of the

review that resulted, particularly the insights into the implications of the approach for economic theory, that it attracted the attention of the international economics profession. Sraffa himself was highly appreciative of Krishna's review, which has been included in several anthologies and selections on economic theory subsequently. This marked the beginning of a period of fruitful professional association between Krishna Bharadwaj and Piero Sraffa which lasted until Sraffa's death two decades later. Sraffa named her as one of the two editors of his papers along with P. Garegnani; regrettably this is a task which remains unfinished.

Krishna was a visiting fellow at MIT from 1961 for two years, and it was in the USA that her daughter Sudha was born. Not very long after her return to teaching in Bombay, her marriage ran into difficulties and led to eventual separation. During this strained period in her personal life, Krishna was invited to be a Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge, from 1967 and undertook a project of working on the Farm Management Studies which had just been completed in India, for the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge. This author's personal acquaintance with her dates from this period, when the problems of being a woman academic and heading a single-parent household were compounded for Krishna by a bout of severe illness during the winter of 1969-70 involving pleurisy and tuberculosis of the lungs. (The ancient and poorly heated flats on Newnham Road in which Clare housed some of its Fellows were no doubt partly responsible.) It was almost the story of Ramanujam again—but fortunately Krishna made a complete recovery and resumed work on her project. This work, published as a DAE monograph, set out the critique of marginalist economics applied to agriculture which she was to develop in several papers later. Published under the title of *Production Conditions in Indian Agriculture*, it contained a critique of the production function approach—to be developed more rigorously in her CDS, Trivandrum paper, 'A sceptical note on so-called technical relations in agriculture'—and it also contained the seminal ideas on interlinking of modes of agrarian exploitation, which many other economists were to develop later under the rubric of 'interlinked markets'. (It must be noted with regret that the originality and priority in time of her published ideas on interlinked markets, were not always recognised by economists later working with her ideas.)

At Cambridge, Krishna was of course in the thick of the continuing fall-out of the capital theory controversy. The Cambridge school's onslaught on neoclassical theory which had indeed started in the 1920s and 30s, took the form in the post-war period of showing the untenability of the logical foundations of the notion of an aggregate production function. Since the value of capital could not be defined independently of the rate of profit this implied the necessity of a prior theory of distribution of output between wages and profits, and there

was a logical contradiction in identifying the rate of profit with the 'marginal productivity of capital' derived from the aggregate production function.

Many of the Cambridge economists who participated in this debate extended their critique to the value-price transformation problem in Ricardo and Marx, and thought that the labour theory of value in its simple form was not logically tenable. Krishna Bharadwaj was also broadly of this view; acceptance of the concept of economic surplus combined with prices of production derived from the Sraffa system, appeared to be the alternative, conceptual framework that she found acceptable. Unlike some others, however, she did not consider it correct to say that Marx had been superseded theoretically by Sraffa.

Sraffa himself was always extremely reticent on the relation of his system to that of Marx; but in the course of meetings with Krishna (as recounted by her to this author) many years ago, he expressed deep disapproval, in no uncertain terms, of those academics who thought that the Marxist system had been transcended after the publication of his book. Krishna recognised that the problem with thus using Sraffa to critique Marx lay in the fact that the latter did not develop merely a 'pure' production system based on technical relations but located the question of distribution firmly in class struggle; no system of equations can capture this, though it can capture the economic consequences. (Marxists would further argue that not only distribution but the technical coefficients themselves were pervaded by the effects of class struggle.)

On her return to India in 1971, Krishna spent a year as Visiting Professor at the Delhi School of Economics, at the end of which she moved to the newly established Jawaharlal Nehru University. The loss to the Delhi School of Economics was a gain of great importance for JNU. There was no economics department at JNU at that time and the then Vice-Chancellor, G. Parthasarathy, invited Krishna to join the Centre for Political Studies, which she did in 1972. The decision was taken to set up an economics department with Krishna as the head; she recruited in effect the first five members of the new Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, which started teaching M.A. students from August 1973 with a faculty of six members.

The years from 1973-74 to 1989-90 at JNU were busy and productive years for Krishna: sustained intellectual activity was combined with important administrative work in institution-building. This was no doubt helped by the fact that Krishna's health was relatively stable apart from occasional problems with blood pressure; nevertheless her intellectual output by any standards was phenomenal. Five monographs and books, and forty-two research papers in national and international journals were published by her during this period, despite the fact that she was Chairperson of the Centre several times and also served as Dean, apart from being associated with the UGC

and ICSSR at various times. She saw the Thorner memorial lectures delivered by her at Dhaka in published form, brought to her by long-time friend Alice Thorner barely a fortnight before being hospitalised in mid-February, but her book on *Classical Theories of Value and Distribution* is still in press.

In her R.C. Dutt lectures published as *Classical Political Economy and the Rise to Dominance of Supply and Demand Theories* Krishna surveyed the surplus-based theories of the classical writers and traced the mechanism of their supplanting by what she conceived of as the supply and demand based theories. Although the focus of the lectures was mainly on the changes in the context of concepts, in her other writings she showed that she was well aware of the fact that later theories related to a different domain and addressed a different set of questions from those addressed by the classical writers, so that the shift represented a change in the domain of questions considered to be important and not simply a different way of looking at the same domain.

The previous year she had published jointly with her research student P.K. Das an important paper on 'Tenurial relations and mode of exploitation', in which some of the ideas earlier expressed in her *Production Conditions in Indian Agriculture* on the relevance of the size of farming family as a determinant of labour supply in petty leasing, were tested empirically, as also was the idea of restricting the size of the leased-out parcel by landowners to maximise output and rent.

The subject matter of these two publications gives a good idea of her tremendous range, from questions of theory and method to the analysis of agrarian relations in a situation of change, rooted in empirical investigation. Since there was a logical unity in her thought which arose from the attempt to develop an overarching and consistent methodology, it was possible for her to move with ease from a discussion of the concept of 'equilibrium' in theory to the idea of 'production function' in agriculture and on to a discussion, say, of the nature of unemployment in the rural sector.

It is hardly possible to do justice to Krishna's monumental academic *oeuvre* in the space of this brief note written hurriedly as *Social Scientist* is in press; such a project will have to await a more considered and dispassionate appraisal than is possible in the immediate aftermath of a bereavement.

In the twenty years that she taught and lived at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Krishna Bharadwaj set standards of scholarship and of an ideal model of the teacher-student relationship which others can certainly try to emulate but would have difficulty in surpassing. She was accessible at all times and gave unstintingly of her time to colleagues and students alike. When research students' fellowships ran out and they had problems finding a place to work, they lived in



Krishna's house: several doctoral theses were completed in this manner, and not only of those who were her direct supervisees.

An aspect of her personality and thinking which must be recorded is her unswerving radicalism. Again, because this was founded on a deeply thought out bedrock of philosophy, it was impervious to and unshaken by temporary and contingent crises. She was deeply conscious of the reality of social exploitation in this country, and extremely sensitive to and disturbed by what she saw as the rise of authoritarian tendencies and of communal and caste sentiments in recent years. Activists of the women's movement, the trade-union movement and the broader political movement on the left found in her a staunch and consistent ally. They never had to explain anything to her when they went with letters and petitions on issues as diverse as the Muslim women's bill, the amendment to the dowry act, or the Mandal question. She had already anticipated their arguments and reached further than they had on the basis of a more subtle and complex understanding of social issues. It is not only the world of academic scholarship which has been irreparably impoverished by the premature passing away a week ago of Krishna Bharadwaj: the loss is as great for the dwindling band of those who uphold what she thought of as the good, old-fashioned values.

UTSA PATNAIK  
March 15, 1992

**WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM**

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

**DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA**

The Indian Economy in Adversity and Debt <b>Artik Rai</b>	8
Structural Adjustment and the State: From Consent to Coercion <b>Sukumar Muralidharan</b>	29
International Trade and Debt: India in the Eighties <b>Sushil Khanna</b>	47
Distributional Dimensions and Macro-economic Policy Implications of External Liberalisation Under Structural Adjustment <b>Korkut Boratav</b>	63
Macro-economic Policy and Planning Economic Transformation <b>Prabhat Patnaik</b>	77
Economic Adjustment: A Programme for the Medium Term <b>Arjun Ghosh</b>	89
Statement to the Group of Ministers on Arthur Dunkel's Draft of the final Act on Uruguay Round of GATT Negotiations <b>Surendra J. Patel</b>	99
The Dunkel Text: An Assessment <b>Deepak Nayyar</b>	108
REVIEW ARTICLE The Getting of Wisdom <b>Jayati Ghosh</b>	115

# **SOCIAL SCIENTIST**

VOLUME 20

NUMBERS 1-2

JAN.-FEB. 1992

## **ADVISORY EDITORS**

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekedath  
Jacob Eapen

## **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## **CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT**

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

### **Inland**

Single issue	Rs. 15
Double issue	Rs. 20
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 150
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 200
Annual (students)	Rs. 100
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 225
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 300

(Rs. 10 extra if by outstation cheque)

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

Rajendra Prasad

## **EDITOR**

Prabhat Patnaik

## **EDITORIAL OFFICE**

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## **Foreign (In US Dollars)**

Annual:	
Air mail	60
Sea mail	50

ISSN 0970 - 0293

The grant for publication from Indian Council of Historical Research is gratefully acknowledged.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## *Introduction*

In the past few years, the slogans of 'structural adjustment' and 'economic restructuring' have come to dominate economic policy discussions. The terms are often used in a deliberately vague manner, or in such a way as to mask the real content of the policies that are being imposed. The importance of altering economic structures, and in particular the way that production and distribution are organized in a society, was highlighted by development economists many years ago. It was then recognized that without major changes in institutions and property relations which affect production, desired patterns of accumulation and distributional goals would not be achieved. However, the current use of 'structural adjustment' refers not to this essential motivation for development, but to a need to change production structures in an economy so as to make it more 'internationally competitive' and 'allow for enforced' balance of external payments. Essentially this amounts to an organisation of the economy which is consistent with trade between unequals, with production and the pattern of trade in the developing country governed by the interests of the developed countries.

This use of the concept has become significant because of its adoption by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which use their lending powers to force developing countries to accept policy packages called 'Structural Adjustment Programmes'. These programmes have certain very typical features, which are closely related to the process of economic liberalisation and based on the guiding ideological principle of the primacy of 'free markets'. They are usually imposed on economies 'in distress', in which internal and external imbalances have created a situation of mounting debt, foreign exchange shortage and difficulties in meeting even short-run payments. In the past decade, developing countries in these circumstances have been denied access to most forms of external finance other than small amounts disbursed in dribbles by the increasingly miserly multilateral financial institutions, the IMF and World Bank. For these rather small inflows of funds, countries in financial stress have been forced to accept policies which fundamentally alter the economic processes within them, and push them into even greater dependence on metropolitan capital over time. This is part of a wider attempt by metropolitan

capital in the rich industrial countries to reimpose an unequal international order, at a time when developing countries are seen to be weak, divided, economically distressed and ideologically confused.

This matter is of special relevance to us today because India is currently being forced to accept the very same structural adjustment package, which comes accompanied by the other current catch-words of 'liberalisation' and 'globalisation'. These policies have been strongly supported by certain sections of our elite and middle classes, whose political, social and economic links to metropolitan countries are increasingly closer than their relationship to the working masses of India. But this support should not blind us to the reality that this set of policies goes fundamentally against the interests of the mass of our people, and essentially serves the purposes of metropolitan capital. They must be strongly resisted if any alternative and more equitable path of development is to be hoped for. The very strength of the pressures which are insisting on the adoption of these policies requires a clear understanding of the roots of the present crisis and the motivation of the liberalisers, if such pressures are to be effectively resisted. This issue of *Social Scientist* is therefore devoted to various aspects of the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF and World Bank, as well as possible alternative adjustment strategies for India today.

The current economic crisis is possibly the most serious one the country has faced since Independence. At no time before this has the vulnerability to international capital been greater, both in terms of direct and indirect pressures on domestic policy and in terms of the ability of capital flows to destabilize the economy. It also comes at a time of greater ideological assertion by votaries of free market policies inside and outside the country. In a proximate sense, this crisis is the result of a set of processes under way over the past decade, in which externally, national economic sovereignty has been progressively undermined through continued macro-economic imbalances which necessitated greater reliance on external financing. This was actually abetted by international agencies like the IMF and World Bank, which encouraged India to borrow increasingly from the short-term international capital market in order to step up the aggregate rate of growth to the neglect of internal and external balance. Internally, social and economic inequalities have been heightened by the enrichment of some groups at the expense of those already underprivileged.

In a deeper sense, however, this crisis is the culmination of the whole pattern of post-Independence development, reflecting the internal contradictions of the 'liberal' developmental state as well as the politics of the mixed economy. Within a basically capitalist system, a primary function of the state has been to protect private property rights, and thus to deny the possibility of any radical

redistribution of assets (including land) or income. At the same time, the legacy of the national movement and the post-Independence social consensus required the state to play an active role in the accumulation process for development, using some degree of central planning and the mixed economy model as means to achieve desired goals of growth and welfare. This dichotomy gave rise to several contradictions and put constraints on the successful implementation of the developmental role of the state.

In an overview paper which traces the background to the present crisis, Kartik Rai identifies three principal contradictions which have marked the processes of economic development in independent India. The economic patterns of the eighties can be seen, he argues, as a culmination of the operation of these contradictions.

Firstly, the relative absence of institutional changes has meant, given the unequal distribution of assets and income, a very narrow base for economic growth. This has meant that the state has emerged as the major agent of economic growth, because of the small size of the market and lack of dynamism of large segments of the economy. To fulfil this role, the state is forced to take on more and more expenditures, on accumulation and on subsidies and transfers to particular sections of the economy, even as it is unable to raise sufficient revenues from the materially endowed classes. This leads over time to a fiscal crisis, which in turn encourages pressures within the country for a reduction of state involvement in economic activity.

The inability to raise resources is part of a wider difficulty of the state in restraining the excesses of the private capitalists and other wealthy groups. The failure of the state to impose a minimum discipline upon capitalists has led to what Prabhat Patnaik has called 'primitive acquisitiveness'—an appropriation and concentration of wealth which is not used for productive purposes but for private enrichment and on luxury consumption of various types. This is reflected in the constrained resource position of the state, the growth and prosperity of the parallel or black market economy which is not subject to any controls, and the proliferation of extra-legal economic activities many of which depend on state regulations and which have become major sources of profit. Inflation also becomes an expression of this general tendency; another is the increasing inability of the state to control the overall direction of economic processes. In turn this renders the mixed economy, and the capitalist system on which it is based, increasingly unworkable.

This process is closely related to another fundamental problem of the mixed economy—that of the mismatch between demands generated by the private sector and the production potential of the economy guided by the public sector. The initial unequal income distribution, compounded by the inequalizing pattern of growth, generates a pattern of effective demand based on the elite's requirements. These are

influenced by the international demonstration effect, so that the elite hankers after goods and services characteristic of the affluent West, and rebels against controls which prevent the realisation of such demands. This leads to pressures for import liberalisation and the alteration of production processes to incorporate the introduction of such new products.

All these contradictions were manifest in India over the 1980s, and the processes of economic 'liberalisation' and deregulation which were initiated then were therefore naturally associated with large and growing fiscal imbalances, growing external deficits and increased foreign debt. The current crisis can be seen as a direct result of these processes, which involved an acceleration of economic growth patterned on the requirements of the elite. The imbalances thus created were inevitably unsustainable, and the consequent liquidity problems have forced the government to go with begging bowls to the multilateral financing institutions on the false grounds that 'there is no alternative'. The result is the imposition of policies which will further increase economic dependence on metropolitan capital, and also put the burden of adjustment and restructuring on the very sections of population which derived no material benefit from the earlier boom.

Sukumar Muralidharan's paper on the state and structural adjustment mentions several of these aspects. He highlights the basic dilemma of the liberal developmental state, which seeks to preserve private property even as it attempts to recruit to its cause the mass of citizens, including the economically disenfranchised. He argues that this dilemma involves a movement from a government based on consent to one which rules by coercion. The imposition of the IMF-World Bank policy package is an important part of this process, since such policies are essentially unfeasible in a pluralist democracy. The move to coercion—and thus to the greater dominance of the propertied classes—is necessarily accompanied by some amount of external pressure.

Sushil Khanna's contribution concentrates on changes in external trade and financing in the eighties, and describes how the Indian economy which had earlier been relatively resilient to external shocks, has become increasingly vulnerable over the decade. Despite the high rate of growth of exports in the first half of the eighties and the savings from import substitution in oil and the falling world price of petroleum, the actual trade deficit grew dramatically by the end of the decade. Khanna shows how this can be traced to the effects of import liberalisation for selected goods as well as the significant increase in defence imports over the decade. The dependence on external financing arose from these factors, and the dependence itself allowed for more external pressure on domestic policy making, in turn implying a more 'coercive' role for the state.



Such coercion essentially involves more discipline and control over the working classes rather than the capitalists or rentiers who have been the more unmindful of even bourgeois legality. This is evident from the paper on the Turkish experience of economic liberalisation by Korkut Boratav, which shows how the new policies do not involve a departure from 'rent-seeking behaviour' by the elite, but simply a change in the nature of rents, or advantages to be derived from the state's activities. Boratav mentions several new forms of rent which accrue to favoured groups from the various measures for liberalisation, privatisation and outward orientation, as well as the growing strength of political clientelism which determines the distribution of favours in the new economic regime. He points out that financial liberalisation internally leads to 'the kingdom of the rentier' and to the trade-off between wages and interest income, while external financial (capital account) liberalisation creates a capital flight syndrome and subservience to the whims of international capital.

This argument demolishes a frequently heard justification for free-market oriented economic strategies—that they involve a reduction in state- or bureaucracy-determined distribution of economic favours. The current ideological hegemony of arguments for market-based economic policies and the withdrawal of the state from the economic domain, ignores several important fallacies within such arguments. One of these is that markets (supposedly unlike the state) somehow function independently of the property relations or socio-political matrix of the economy, which determine the relative power positions and bargaining strength of different agents and classes. In fact, the functioning of markets is as much a reflection of the dynamics of political economy within a society as the functioning of the state; indeed, the two are very closely related. Another fallacy is that markets necessarily lead to more 'efficient' economic outcomes—an axiom emanating from ideal constructs based on very unrealistic assumptions, which have nowhere been justified in practice.

These fallacies imply that economic strategies guided by blind reliance on markets are generally likely to have results very different from those claimed, and this is especially true of IMF-World Bank policy packages. This is amply illustrated by the World Bank's own review of its Structural Adjustment Programmes over the 1980s, described in the review article. The basic elements of these programmes include reduction of the fiscal deficit typically through cuts in subsidies and capital and infrastructural spending, trade policy changes mainly import liberalisation accompanied by exchange rate devaluation as well as some opening up of the external capital account, financial reforms including freeing (raising) of domestic interest rates, privatisation of public sector enterprises and closing down of financially weak industrial units. There is an emphasis on getting prices right i.e., similar to world prices, which is stressed for all

prices except that of labour, so that real wages and the wage share in income usually fall drastically. By the World Bank's own admission, the process of adjustment by these means has always taken longer than anticipated, and in most cases is still not complete even after nearly a decade. In almost all cases, economic growth has slackened, the balance of payments has improved only rarely and marginally, real wages have fallen and income distribution has worsened, unemployment has increased; and agriculture has not necessarily improved its performance even while de-industrialisation is under way. Significantly, even the World Bank admits that the burden of such adjustment is essentially borne by the working classes and poorer, more disadvantaged groups, who become worse off than earlier with not much hope of an improvement in their situation in the near future.

Obviously, this unfair, unequal and inefficient strategy cannot represent the best means of economic adjustment, and so all talk to the effect that 'there is no alternative' is both misleading and pernicious. That viable alternatives exist and should be systematically pursued as part of any genuine national drive for development is emphasized in the articles by Prabhat Patnaik and Arun Ghosh. Patnaik makes a forceful and convincing case for the continued validity of planning, especially for medium term adjustment. This involves the government determining the overall trajectory of development, within which there should of course be room for the private sector to operate. Patnaik shows how the usual arguments against planning are not logically tenable—thus, economic inefficiencies are just as possible in a market system, and lack of innovation does not hold particularly for a developing economy in which technological absorption and diffusion are still primary. Similarly, export pessimism and 'inward-orientation' are not endemic to planning as such, but reflect a particular strategy which can be modified. By contrast, the devaluation-deflation-liberalisation package is not only iniquitous, but makes the economy progressively dependent on the caprices of international capital, which can be especially unstable during the traverse to a new growth path. Patnaik mentions that there are still unresolved problems with the planning process in a mixed economy, which require creative solutions. Foremost among these are the problems of work motivation and of control over the bourgeoisie's tendencies to 'primitive acquisitiveness' rather than accumulation.

Arun Ghosh deals specifically with a programme for medium term adjustment in the current Indian context. He stresses the need for caution in balance of payments management, and mentions several means of achieving fiscal balance. A significant issue is the need to unearth 'unrecorded' or 'black incomes, which is essential for achieving fiscal goals as well as cutting down on inflationary pressures in the economy. The most important medium term goal should be the raising of productivity levels across the economy, for which the government

should focus on investment and efficiency in the infrastructure sectors. These include not only physical infrastructure and energy sources, but also human and social infrastructure, such as facilities for health, education and skill development, all of which are crucial for subsequent growth.

Of course, the viability of such alternatives depends both on domestic political will and the extent to which the government is able to function independently of pressures from metropolitan capital. Thus, it is important to be aware of the co-ordinated international attacks on our national sovereignty in various international fora. Such attacks come not only from private metropolitan capital and the multilateral financial institutions, but also institutions like GATT which increasingly represent the interests of the rich industrial countries and the US in particular. The dangers of accepting the current GATT proposals are brought out in the contributions by Surendra Patel and Deepak Nayyar. Both of these were originally statements to the Indian Group of Ministers on the Dunkel Draft for the completion of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations. Patel traces the background to the current proposals, and describes the international context which allows the rich industrial countries to push their demands in this manner. Nayyar provides some options for bargaining strategy given the unequal world order. It is evident from both of these pieces that acceptance of the proposals as they stand would not only compromise our national sovereignty and constrain the autonomy of domestic policy making, but also affect the long term development of the economy. This is particularly true in the areas of patent protection for technological development, subsidisation of agriculture for domestic food security and freedom of operation for multinational companies.

It is clear that two processes are simultaneously at work in India today. The first is an attempt, by metropolitan capital and its votaries within the country, to incorporate the Indian economy closely into the workings of international capitalism, in such a way as to render any future attempt at autonomous and independent development unviable. The second is closely related, and is a thinly veiled attack on the living conditions and politico-economic strength of the poor and working classes of our country through the adoption of market-based structural adjustment policies. Resistance to both of these processes must come from an understanding of their true nature as well as the positing of feasible alternative strategies. This is the motivation behind the contributions to this issue.

JAYATI GHOSH

Centre for Economic Studies and Planning  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KARTIK RAI\*

## *The Indian Economy in Adversity and Debt*

Purely in terms of its symptoms the crisis that overtook the Indian economy in 1991 was quite unprecedented in the history of post-Independence India. We did of course have higher inflation on a couple of occasions in the past, but we never had inflation of such a high order of magnitude (which even official spokesmen privately admit is nearly 20 per cent in terms of the consumer price index) in a year in which the harvest was excellent, in which there were no external price shocks such as we had in 1973-74 and 1979-80, and which followed two previous years of excellent harvests too. By way of comparison one can take 1964-65 when also prices, including agricultural prices had risen despite an excellent harvest; but 1964-65 had been sandwiched between two years of very poor harvests, so the price increase of that year was less unaccountable than that of the recent past.

Likewise, we did have another episode of a serious foreign exchange crisis in 1957. But the recent exchange crisis was not only far more acute, with the foreign exchange reserves at one stage barely sufficient to cover two weeks' import-bill, but, unlike the earlier occasion, was unrelated to any specific development on the trade front. The 1957 foreign exchange crisis was because of a surge in imports which occurred at the beginning of the Second Plan with the government liberally giving out import licences in the confident belief that the sterling reserves we had accumulated would see us through; as the reserves declined precipitously it had to clamp down on imports. But, while the recent crisis was accompanied no doubt by a significant widening of the trade, and more importantly of the current account, deficit on the balance of payments (on which more later), this widening alone can scarcely be held responsible for the crisis: its immediate cause has to be located in the capital rather than the current account of the balance of payments.

It is obvious that the crisis, manifested in a combination of inflation and foreign exchange shortage, was acute. What is unprecedented how-

---

\*Kartik Rai writes on economic affairs in *People's Democracy*.

ever is not this acuteness as such, but the fact that it was unrelated to any specific developments in the sphere of production or trade, i.e., in the real spheres of the economy, or to any tangible international shocks, during the period in question. Looking at it differently, the recent crisis was qualitatively different from any thing which the economy had faced previously. It arose primarily, as we shall see below, because of the caprices of capital, both domestic and, more importantly, international.

The fact that the economy has become so vulnerable to the caprices of international capital is a result of the so-called 'liberalisation' measures, adopted with special vigour since the mid-1980s. A marked characteristic of the economic policy-regime erected in the 50s and continued thereafter, though admittedly with a gradual drift towards 'liberalisation', had been not only the hemming in, to an extent, of direct foreign investment, and the use of the State capitalist sector as a counterweight against foreign capital (again only upto a point until multinationals started penetrating this sector itself), but more importantly a reluctance to go in for loan capital in international commercial markets. It relied heavily on 'aid' but eschewed the temptation to go in for commercial borrowings. An important consequence was the insulation of the Indian economy from the caprices of international investors. The 'liberalisation' of the 1980s removed this insulation. If earlier we had episodes of crisis, even acute ones, arising from specific developments on the production or the trade front, in 1991 we had crisis arising from an altogether peculiar cause; namely that international investors 'lost their confidence in India'. It is in this fundamental sense that the recent crisis was unprecedented, and it is for this reason that we have to look carefully at how we came to such a pass and what are the options before us.

## I

The economic policy regime erected in the 1950s was not just a brain-child of Nehru, as is often made out both by its admirers as well as its critics. Its roots lay in the freedom struggle itself. The economy had been dominated by metropolitan capital and metropolitan commodities in the pre-independence period. Freedom meant freedom from this domination; and this could not be ensured without giving the State in independent India a major role in building up infrastructure, expanding and strengthening the productive base of the economy, setting up new financial institutions and regulating and coordinating economic activity. This was necessary for building capitalism itself, though some no doubt entertained the fond hope that all this would add up to a transition to socialism. State capitalism and State intervention in other words were essential instruments for the development of a relatively autonomous Indian capitalism, displacing metropolitan

capital from the pre-eminent position it had occupied in the colonial economy. International capitalist agencies like the Fund and the Bank were opposed to the displacement from the very beginning, as were the metropolitan States: they resented the cordoning off of the domestic market against the penetration of metropolitan commodities; they resented the continued existence of a State capitalist sector; and they resented the plethora of regulations upon capital, especially metropolitan capital. How their resentment translated itself into a struggle against the extant economic policy regime, a struggle that sometimes took the form of open hostility and boycott and at other times the form of putting pressure from within via the leverage they (especially the Bank) had acquired by 'aiding' this development itself, is a story which is too well-known to need recapitulation here. What is worth discussing here is the set of internal contradictions of this regime that have contributed to its progressive displacement, if only to dispel the notion so widely floated in the media that the Marxist critics of the current 'liberalisation' merely want a return to the antiquated policies of the 1950s.

Three mutually reinforcing and interrelated contradictions need to be noted. First, the State within the old economic policy regime had to simultaneously fulfil two different roles which were mutually incompatible in the long-run. On the one hand it had to maintain growing expenditures, in particular investment expenditure, in order to keep the domestic market expanding. The absence of any radical land redistribution had meant that the domestic market, especially for industrial goods, had remained socially narrowly-based; it had also meant that the growth of agricultural output, though far greater than in the colonial period, remained well below potential, and even such growth as occurred was largely confined, taking the country as a whole, to a narrow stratum of landlords-turned-capitalists and sections of rich peasants who had improved their economic status. Under these circumstances, a continuous growth in State spending was essential for the growth of the market; it was the key element in whatever overall dynamics the system displayed. At the same time however the State exchequer was the medium through which large-scale transfers were made to the capitalist and proto-capitalist groups; the State in other words was an instrument for the 'primary accumulation of capital'. It was not of course the only instrument: direct means such as the eviction of tenants, private encroachment on common resources, private encroachment on state-owned resources such as forests from whose use the poor were simultaneously excluded; all these played their role. But the State exchequer remained the pre-eminent mechanism for 'primary accumulation'; through the non-payment of taxes (which the state generally turned a blind eye upon), through a variety of subsidies and transfers, through lucrative State-contracts private fortunes got built up at the expense of the State exchequer.

The contradiction between these two different roles of the State manifested itself, despite increasing resort to indirect taxation and administered price-hikes, through a growth in the fiscal deficit, i.e., the excess of total state expenditures, both revenue and capital, over State revenues. In the 1950s and the 1960s the revenue account of the Central Government at least was in surplus, but in the 1970s even this event into a deficit, which climbed steadily from Rs. 1715 crores in 1980-81 to Rs. 10515 crores in 1988-89, Rs. 12436 crores in 1989-90 and as much as Rs. 17,585 crores in 1990-91 (RE). A persistent and growing fiscal deficit, under all circumstances, necessarily and inevitably undermines the State capitalist sector and strengthens demands for a rolling back of 'dirigisme'. The reason for this is the following.

A fiscal deficit has to be financed through borrowing, i.e., through the private holding of additional claims directly or indirectly (mediated through the banking system) upon the State. If the borrowing is from abroad, then the building up of pressure for a change in the policy regime is obvious. If the borrowing is domestic then private wealth-holders may be willing to hold claims upon the State only after they have increased their holdings of other assets, such as urban property or consumer durables or commodity stocks, in which case the fiscal deficit has an immediate inflationary impact owing to this. To keep inflation under check the State would have to cut back its expenditure which slows down the economy and eventually arouses capitalists' demands for an alternative policy regime. Even if private wealth-holders are willing temporarily to hold government debt without there being any inflationary pressures immediately, this only accentuates the inflation-proneness of the economy in the long-run with identical results. And finally at some point, both at home and abroad, the demand is raised that in lieu of claims upon the state, the private wealth-holders should be allowed to hold State property directly, i.e. for the privatisation of State-owned units. This is the sort of demand that we are witnessing in India today, namely that the State should cut down its fiscal deficit by 'privatising' several public sector units.

The second contradiction lay in the inability of the state to impose a minimum measure of 'discipline' and 'respect for law' among the capitalists, without which no capitalist system anywhere can be tenable. Disregard for the laws of the land, especially tax-laws, was an important component of the primary accumulation of capital. The same disregard, the same absence of a collective discipline which a capitalist class imposes upon itself in any established capitalist country also meant that a successful transition could not be made from a Nehruvian *dirigiste* regime to an alternative viable capitalist regime with State intervention, but of a different kind. After all the State is strongly interventionist even in a country like Japan, but it is interventionism based on close collaboration between the state and capital which simultaneously promotes rigorous discipline among the

capitalists. To be sure the extent and nature of State intervention in Japan is itself a result of specific features of the Japanese civil society as it has developed historically which cannot simply be emulated elsewhere. Indeed the point being made here, namely the inability of the Indian State to promote a measure of discipline among the Indian capitalists is obviously merely descriptive one, the analysis of which has to be located in the specific nature of the Indian society and polity—a task outside the scope of this paper. But the description is important; it provides a proximate explanation of why the retreat from Nehruvian *dirigisme*, a policy of State intervention and control of economy instead of leading to an alternative viable capitalist regime carving out a space for itself in the international economy, through an alternative mode of State intervention, has resulted in a situation where the economy is left to the caprices of international capital. Indeed many advocates of a retreat from Nehruvian *dirigisme* had talked explicitly of the Japanese 'model' and had hoped for a new consolidation of Indian capitalism much in the way that Japanese capitalism had consolidated itself. They were of course being unhistorical. An important aspect of their unhistoricity was their refusal to recognise the inability of the Indian State to impose a measure of 'discipline' on Indian capital.

The third contradiction had its roots in the cultural ambience of an ex-colonial society like ours. The market for industrial goods was from its very inception, as we have seen, a socially narrowly-based one. Capitalism in its metropolitan centres however is characterised by continuous product innovation, the phenomenon of newer and ever newer goods being thrown on to the market, resulting in alterations of life-styles. In an ex-colonial economy like ours, the comparatively narrow social segment in to whose hands additional purchasing power accrues in a large measure and whose growing consumption therefore provides the main source of the growth in demand for industrial consumer goods, is anxious to emulate the life-styles prevailing in the metropolitan centres. It is not satisfied with having more and more of the same goods which are domestically-produced, nor is it content merely with expending its additional purchasing power upon such new goods as the domestic economy, on its own, is capable of innovating. Its demand is for the new goods which are being produced and consumed in the metropolitan centres, and which, given the constraints upon the innovative capacity of the domestic economy, are incapable of being locally-produced purely on the basis of indigenous resources and indigenous technology. An imbalance therefore inevitably arises in economies like ours between what the economy actually produces, or is capable of producing purely on its own steam, and what the relatively affluent sections who account for much of the growth of potential demand for consumer goods would like to consume. This imbalance may be kept in check by import controls, though such controls inevitably



give rise to clandestine imports, through smuggling, being sold in local 'black markets'. But even leaving aside such clandestine imports, the more the imbalance between what is produced and what is sought to be consumed is kept in check through controls, the more it grows because of further innovations in the metropolitan economies. The result is a powerful build-up of pressure among the more affluent groups in society for a dismantling of import controls over metropolitan goods. The fact that the removal of such controls would result in substantial sections of domestic production going under, i.e., in a de-industrialisation in the domestic economy, together with an accentuation of the already precarious balance of payments situation, does not come in the way of such pressures being built up. The inculcation of a desire to emulate the fashionable life-styles prevailing in the metropolitan countries among segments of the underdeveloped economy, acts as a powerful instrument in the hands of metropolitan capital in its efforts to prise open the market of such an economy and to wrest back the space which it had yielded as a result of granting political independence. The contradiction between the extant production-pattern and the desired consumption-pattern of the affluent sections of the population contributes to a dismantling of the *dirigiste* economic regime. And this contradiction too has been manifest in India.

The net result of the working out of all these contradictions has been evident in the Indian economy for quite some time. The growth in the index of manufacturing industrial production which is a barometer of the expansion in the possibilities of productive accumulation is quite revealing. The growth-rate figures for different periods are summarised in the Table below:

Table I  
Growth-rates in the Index of Manufacturing Industrial production  
(Annual Average Compound Rates)

1951-65	7.8 per cent	1980-81 to 1984-85	5.7 per cent
1965-70	3.3 per cent	1984-85 to 1989-90	8.8 per cent
1970-71 to 1980-81	4.05 per cent		

*Notes and Sources:* The figures upto 1970 have 1960 as base, the figures for the 70s have 1970 as base, and the figures for the 80s have 1980-81 as base. (These figures are taken from various issues of *Economic Survey* and *Report on Currency and Finance*.)

After 15 years of rapid industrial expansion in the fifties and the early sixties, there was a dramatic decline in the rate of manufacturing growth during the next 15 years. Even though the growth-rate picked up somewhat in the early eighties, it was still nowhere near the rates witnessed in the first 15 years of planning. It is only after the mid-

1980s that a pronounced boom occurred once again in the manufacturing sector of the Indian industries.

The fact that the 15 years after the mid-sixties which were characterised by a relative stagnation in manufacturing output also witnessed a decline in the rate of growth of public investment compared to the earlier period is well-known. The increasing fiscal difficulties faced by the state, which were manifested inter alia in the revenue account of the Central Government itself running into a deficit during the course of this period, and which were a result, as we have argued, of its role in promoting 'primary accumulation of capital', entailed that the State could not adequately fulfil its other role, namely as an expander of the market: a number of industries which catered to mass consumption or to the investment requirements of the State languished. And the slower expansion of public investment also meant a slower growth in the productive potential of the industrial sector on account of the infrastructural constraints that resulted from such slower expansion.

Given the sluggish home market, breaking into the export markets could have provided a new stimulus for industrial expansion and a new basis for capital accumulation in productive channels. But export markets were dominated by metropolitan capital. To permit Indian capital a share of this export market as a junior partner, metropolitan capital demanded a price, namely that it too should have a share of the Indian market. Innumerable business delegations came to India from the U.S., West Germany and Japan, held talks with Indian capitalists on the possibilities of joint-ventures for meeting third country demands, but the talks always foundered because of the foreigners' insistence that the Indian market too should be opened up to them. As for Indian capital's breaking into export markets, not as a junior partner of metropolitan capital, but with a massive effort of its own backed by the Indian State (though making use of imported technology where necessary), this never became a serious possibility because, among other things, of the point mentioned above, namely the unwillingness of Indian capital to accept a certain minimum 'discipline' imposed by its own State upon itself, which was necessary for the purpose and which underlay the international successes of Japanese capitalism. The prospects of Indian capital consequently remained bleak.

In this context, a schism developed within the ranks of the Indian capitalists. A section was willing to make compromises with metropolitan capital on the terms that the latter demanded: it was all for allowing metropolitan capital to capture a share of the Indian market even at the expense of the enriched capitalists, not to mention the public sector, in the hope of being able to better its own prospects as a junior partner, both in the domestic as well as in the international market. It was thus in favour of import liberalisation, a full retreat

from Nehruvian *dirigisme*, and accepting the kind of regime that metropolitan capital generally, and the Bank and the Fund as its chief spokesmen, had been demanding. The more powerful and the more entrenched monopoly houses however were more circumspect. They would not mind import liberalisation in areas other than their own, including in areas dominated by the public sector; they would not mind collaborating with foreign capital to add to their empires and hence a degree of relaxation of controls to further facilitate such collaboration; but they would not like encroachments by metropolitan capital upon their own empires. Their attitude towards Fund-Bank style liberalisation therefore was more ambiguous.

Support for Fund-Bank style liberalisation was growing not just among a section of capital. A whole category of an altogether different kind of businessmen was coming up, who were more in the nature of upstarts, international racketeers, fixers, middlemen, often of NRI origin or having NRI links, often linked to smuggling and the arms trade. These in any case did not have much of a production base, and their parasitic intermediary status as well as the international nature of their operations naturally inclined them towards an 'open economy'. On the other side, among the affluent groups of consumers, the desire for an 'open economy' where they could have access to a variety of goods available abroad but not at home, had also grown strong. And finally, one should not exclude a section of the top bureaucracy itself which had close links with the Fund and the Bank, either as ex-employees who might return any time to Washington, or through being engaged in projects of various kinds, or as hopeful aspirants for a berth in Washington; the weight of this section in the top bureaucracy had been growing at an amazingly rapid rate, and its influence naturally was in the direction of adopting the Fund-Bank policy regime. In short, quite apart from the growing leverage exercised by the imperialist agencies in their capacity as 'donors', the internal contradictions of the Nehruvian *dirigiste* policy regime generated increasing support within the powerful and affluent sections of society for altering India's economic policy regime in the manner desired by these agencies.

## II

It is against this background of a two-decade long sluggish industrial growth on the one hand, and growing pressures for a retreat from *dirigisme* and the adoption of a Fund-Bank style 'liberalisation package' on the other that the economic policies of the Rajiv Gandhi government, that marked in several ways a new departure, have to be located. Briefly, three new features characterised its policies. First, there was a significant increase in the magnitude of fiscal deficit as a proportion of the GDP at current market prices. Table II gives three sets of figures for the 1980s, each as a proportion of the GDP, namely (a)

the budgetary deficit of the Central Government, the States and the Union Territories, (b) the fiscal deficit (i.e., the gap between the total outlay and the current revenue), and (c) the difference between the overall investment and savings of the entire public sector.

Table II  
Deficits in the State Budget  
(Percentages of GDP)

	Budget Deficit	Fiscal Deficit	Public Sector Investment- Savings
1980-81	2.5	9.0	6.9
1981-82	1.6	8.4	6.5
1982-83	1.3	9.5	7.1
1983-84	1.0	9.6	7.3
1984-85	2.2	11.2	8.7
1985-86	1.3	10.4	8.6
1986-87	3.1	12.3	9.4
1987-88	1.7	11.6	8.5
1988-89	1.3	11.2	8.9
1989-90 (RE)	2.7	12.8	9.0

Note: Even though the second and third columns also include the extra-budgetary resources of public sector undertakings for financing their plans, the fourth column, taken from CSO, NAS, is more comprehensive for the public sector as a whole.

Source: *Economic Survey*, various issues

The reason for the growing fiscal deficit was not an increase in the share of public investment, but a decline in the share of public savings, caused mainly by the burgeoning revenue deficit, where the current expenditure of the state was growing at a rate far outstripping the growth in tax as well as non-tax revenue despite hikes in indirect taxation and in administered prices. Partly this was because of the government's refusal to garner larger direct tax revenues: even the American supply-side economics which argued that a lowering of tax-rates led to larger tax-revenues (the so-called 'Laffer curve') had been successfully sold to the Indian government despite its palpable failure in the U.S. itself. Partly this was because of the growing expenditure on interest payments (the sins of past deficits catching up with the government), and on subsidies, especially on fertilisers (caused primarily by wrong technological choices involving the setting-up of plants with extraordinarily high capital costs). And partly this was because of general profligacy which characterised the Rajiv Government to an unprecedented extent.

The second feature was the liberalisation of imports of capital goods and components required for a number of commodities catering to luxury consumption, especially for electronics and automobiles. This was justified in the name of 'marching to the 21st century'. And important government officials unashamedly put forward the argument that since even the small segment of the population that demanded such goods, amounted in absolute terms to a fairly large number, the country could go forward on the basis of such an industrialisation strategy whose benefits would 'eventually trickle down' to the poorer sections of the population as well.

The remarkable aspect of the policy of import liberalisation of the Rajiv government was that it was not necessarily tied to a larger export effort; its main immediate thrust was towards producing more goods, luxury goods, for the domestic market. In 1985-86, the very first year that the policy was introduced, there was a dramatic increase in the trade deficit (Table III). In the subsequent years while it remained at the high absolute level (and has climbed up 'sharply' from 1988-89), it did come down as a proportion of GDP. (This is especially true of DGCIS claims). From this many have concluded it would be erroneous to blame the Rajiv government for import profligacy, but this argument misses two important points: first, the high *absolute level* of the trade deficit was sustained despite the fact that owing to the development of Bombay High our oil import bill came down *absolutely* between 1984-85 and 1988-89. But for the import profligacy in other words, our trade deficit should have declined significantly in absolute terms since mineral and related products accounted for nearly a third of our import bill on the former date. Secondly, our remittance inflows during this

Table III  
Trade and Current Account Balance

	Trade Balance (-)		Current Balance (-)	
	Rs. Cr.	U.S. \$ mill.	Rs. Cr.	US.\$ mill.
1983-84	5870.8 (2.84)	5677.8	2264.4 (1.09)	2188.0
1984-85	6721.1 (2.91)	5653.4	2852.4 (1.24)	2399.0
1985-86	9586.0 (3.65)	7835.0	5927.3 (2.26)	4844.6
1986-87	9353.9 (3.19)	7320.2	5830.0 (1.99)	4562.5
1987-88	9296.1 (2.80)	7169.7	6292.6 (1.89)	4853.2
1988-89	13555.6 (3.47)	9360.5	10410.0 (2.66)	7188.4
1989-90	12938.9		10391.1	6241.0

Note : The figures for trade deficit and current deficit are taken from the RBI, whose data differ considerably from, but are superior to the DGCIS data that are often quoted. Figures in brackets are percentages of GDP.

Source : Report on Currency and Finance 1989-90.

period had flattened out and 'soft loans' were becoming more and more difficult to come by. The need was to conserve foreign exchange and the

maintenance of a high, even though steady, absolute level of the trade deficit was a mark of profligacy.

The main head under which imports expanded the most rapidly between these two dates was 'machinery and transport equipment'. The increase in imports under this head between 1984-85 and 1989-90 as a proportion of the increase in total imports between these two dates was as high as 34 per cent, raising the share of this category from 17.7 per cent on the former date to 23.9 per cent on the latter.

Even these figures however do not reveal all: We import a large amount of pearls, precious and semi-precious stones essentially for re-exporting after a certain amount of value addition which is small (about 25 per cent) relative to the value of the imported materials. If we exclude this item from the import-bill, on the ground that it is by and large meant for re-exporting, then the share of the increase in the import value of machinery and transport equipment in the total increase in imports comes to 41.7 per cent. Over two fifths of the increase in our import value in other words (barring what are virtually re-exported) was on account of machinery and transport equipment, which went to a significant extent into the production of a variety of goods for the 'elite' market.

The third new feature was a systematic resort to commercial borrowing abroad including from the NRIs. As the fiscal deficit went up in the latter half of the 1980s so did the current account deficit. Commercial borrowings were increasingly used to finance this deficit which in turn contributed with a lag to keeping up the current account deficit itself (owing to interest payments) and necessitated further borrowing, both for this reason as well as for amortising past loans. Debt has a habit of escalating rapidly, feeding upon itself; and as fresh debt is contracted to pay off old debt the terms at the margin become stiffer, the maturity period shorter and hence the rate of escalation of debt even steeper.

And this is precisely what happened. Firm estimates of India's external debt are hard to come by. The World Bank puts the figure at 71 billion dollars at the end of March 1991. But the World Bank's figure is always somewhat lower than that of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) which is the most comprehensive and reliable. The figure possibly would be closer to 80 billion dollars today which makes us the third largest debtor in the Third World after Brazil and Mexico. The debt in dollar terms perhaps quadrupled since 1980: debt to banks and private individuals must have increased more than 10 times (the latter is the UN's estimate). Since the rupee was being depreciated against the dollar throughout much of this period, the increase in debt in rupee terms was much sharper: it could well be eight times today what it was in 1980. India's debt-service according to the UN absorbed 30 per cent of her exports in the last years of the decade. More recently the proportion is likely to be over a third.

The three features mentioned above were closely inter-related. An increase in fiscal deficit contributes to a rapid build-up of liquid assets in the hands of private wealth-holders. Even when it is not immediately inflationary, in the sense of further aggravating whatever inflationary pressures may already exist owing to cost push factors triggered off by indirect tax and administered price-hikes, it creates an inflationary potential which gets realised when wealth-holders come to acquire inflationary expectations and start moving into commodities. But this build-up of domestic inflationary potential is less, insofar as there is an increase in the current account deficit of the balance of payments, which means in effect that a part of the borrowing to finance the fiscal deficit is occurring abroad and not domestically. Thus if the large fiscal deficits of the Rajiv period had not been accompanied by large current account deficits on the balance of payments, the inflationary overhang would have grown faster and we would have had much higher inflation in the 1980s than we did have. On the other hand if the current account deficit had been as large as it was owing to import liberalisation but the fiscal deficit had actually been smaller, then imported goods would have outcompeted domestic goods to a greater extent (since the home market would have been narrower with a smaller fiscal deficit), and we would have had a larger 'de-industrialisation' and hence a smaller rate of industrial growth than we had. The Rajiv fiscal deficits no doubt contributed to a domestic liquidity built-up: Table IV gives figures to show that until 1988 the spare resources with banks which were available with them for lending but which they could not lend and held instead as spare cash were actually increasing. But by simultaneously running a current account deficit the government managed to avoid the onset of an inflationary crisis (over and above what was 'administered'). The overall result in short was a high industrial growth rate and at the same time the avoidance of an inflationary explosion.

Table IV  
Some Ratios for Scheduled Commercial Banks (Percentages)

	Cash Deposit Ratio	Investment Deposit Ratio	Credit Deposit Ratio
1981	12.8	34.7	66.8
1986	14.3	35.8	65.7
1988	16.1	39.4	59.8
1989*	16.3	39.0	60.5
1990**	15.0	38.6	60.8

\*Relates to 24 March, 1989    \*\*Relates to 23 March, 1990

Source : Report on Currency and Finance 1989-90

To be sure, the industrial growth was nowhere as high as was claimed : there can be little doubt that the index of industrial production with base 1980-81 was manufactured to overstate the growth-rate. It is equally clear that the growth occurred not across a broad spectrum of industries but only over a limited area which however saw significant expansion. Even so, an acceleration of sorts in the industrial growth-rate did occur, and the Table I figures cannot be discounted altogether. What is remarkable however is that there was scarcely any increase in industrial employment. Table V brings together some data on this.

Table V  
Employment in Public and Private Sectors (000's)

As at the end of December	Total	Public Sector	Private Sector	of which manufac.	Larger Private Sector	Small Private Sector
1971	17833	11099	6734	3940	6018	716
1981	23332	15805	7527	4641	6721	806
1985	25011	17584	7425	4478	6602	825
1986	25314	17913	7401	4418	6565	836
1987	25625	18236	7388	4384	6544	844
1988	25941	17984	7457	4374	6599	858

Note : Small' refers to establishments employing 10-24 workers and 'large' to those employing 25 or more.

Source : Ministry of Labour data reproduced in the Report on Currency and Finance 1989-90.

It is clear from the table that between 1985 and 1988 employment in the private sector went up by a mere 32000 while in the private manufacturing sector it actually declined. Even in the public manufacturing sector (not given in the Table) it went up between these two dates by a mere 44000. Thus the acceleration of industrial growth appears to have had no impact on industrial employment whatsoever. In fact, putting public and private manufacturing employment together we find a decline of 60,000 in the total.

The industrial boom of the Rajiv era at the same time however left the economy on a powder-keg. The enormous external debt, a growing portion of it being in the form of short-term borrowing, made the economy acutely vulnerable to currency speculations and 'confidence crises' of international investors, a vulnerability that was an entirely new phenomenon for the Indian economy and the liquidity build up in the domestic economy made it actually vulnerable to sudden inflationary upsurges. Of course such vulnerability to inflationary upsurges was not new for the economy; but earlier, if speculation boosted by excess liquidity had caused spurts in prices of particular



commodities, eg. foodgrains or edible oils, the government had resorted to imports to break the back of speculation. Now, however since the foreign exchange front itself was vulnerable, the possibility of a simultaneous pincer attack from speculators on the both fronts opened for the first time. The Rajiv era sapped whatever resistance the economy had, notwithstanding its inability to grow fast (not to mention solving people's basic problems).

### III

The bubble finally burst in 1990-91. What triggers off a crisis of confidence at any particular juncture is always difficult to pinpoint, since there is always an element of irrationality ('panic') in it. It is thus fruitless to speculate whether it was the political crisis, or the reaction to the Gulf war or simply rumours of an impending crisis that started the panic. The important point is that such a crisis was sooner or later inevitable given the course on which the economy had embarked since the mid-1980s. The escalation of debt, and the increasing weight of short-term debt ('hot money') within it had prepared the ground precisely for such a crisis, and matters did worsen in 1990-91. Preliminary estimates (of DGCIS) put our exports at Rs. 32527 crore for the year and our imports at Rs. 43170 crore which would place debt-service payments (perhaps a little short of \$ 7 billion) at over 40 percent of merchandise exports. Large though the trade deficit was, the current account deficit must have increased sharply owing the large-scale reverse migration that occurred after Iraqi action in Kuwait. Whatever possible economic benefits for the country might have accompanied the reverse migration were not exploited : when owing to the uncertainty over the fate of the Kuwaiti currency many Indians wished to shift their accumulated savings to Indian banks, the Indian banks refused to accept them because they themselves were uncertain about the fate of the Kuwaiti currency. As a result anywhere between Rs. 10,000 and 15,000 crore were lost to the country, which, if accepted, would have prevented the foreign exchange crunch. Western banks had no such hesitation and gleefully accepted what Indian banks had turned down. Not only did we thus miss out on a large capital inflow, but as our tight foreign exchange situation became apparent, there was 'hot money' flow out of the country. The government at this point started depreciating the currency, the extent of depreciation between January and end June (prior to the devaluation) being as much as 20 per cent. This depreciation however only further increased the flight away from the rupee. Indian exporters, expecting the depreciation to continue, i.e. the rupee to fall further, started delaying the repatriation of their exchange earnings back into the country, the magnitude of such unrepatriated exchange earnings in the first 6 months of 1991 amounting to as much as \$ 1 billion.

It is in this context that notwithstanding the severe import restrictions imposed since March and the pledging of confiscated gold to avoid defaults, the new government on the alleged grounds that there are 'no alternatives'. Such a large loan under the EFF carries stiff 'conditionalities'. The government already started implementing some of these 'conditionalities'. These included the two-stage devaluation of the rupee after June 27, amounting to close to 20 per cent which came on top of the 20 per cent depreciation earlier in 1991. Since then there has been further effective depreciation of the rupee. Various other IMF conditions are also being met. The government has also taken a \$500 in Structural Adjustment Loan from the World Bank, which carries very specific conditionalities.

The implications of this course of action are extremely serious and deserve careful study. There are two aspects of any IMF-programme: stabilisation and structural adjustment; these however are related in the sense that stabilisation is brought about in a manner which is itself dictated by what the Fund considers 'desirable' structural adjustment. Thus while it is obvious that a current account deficit, reflecting as it does the fact that a country is living beyond its means, needs for its cure a reduction in the domestic 'absorption' of commodities, the specific manner in which the Fund wants this absorption to be reduced (i.e. achieve 'stabilisation') is governed by the fact that its conception of medium-term adjustment is to create appropriate conditions for private, including foreign, capital to flourish. If capital is to flourish, stabilisation must be at the expense of the working people in towns and the countryside, i.e. at the expense of the workers and peasants. Fund stabilisation measures therefore invariably entail a reduction in the fiscal deficit not through higher direct taxes upon the rich, but through cuts in subsidies to the poor, especially food subsidies, cuts in welfare expenditures, and higher indirect taxes and administered prices. In addition, since it wishes to 'roll back' the state capitalist sector, it advocates cuts in public investment and privatisation of public assets. To ensure that the effects of higher indirect taxes and administered prices as well as of lower food subsidies are not counteracted through higher money wages, the Fund generally suggests a money wage freeze even as the real wages are being eroded.

In third world conditions, freedom for private capital necessarily means hegemony of multi-national capital: the overall conception of the Fund package therefore can be summed up as having three basic components: a rolling back of the State capitalist sector, a re-introduction of the hegemony of multinational capital through the so-called 'freedom of the market forces', and a vastly increased squeeze on the working people. The Fund conditionalities therefore seek to reverse precisely that which was the objective of the anti-imperialist freedom struggle, namely a displacement of the hegemony of multinational capital by building up the State capitalist sector as

bulwark, with a view to providing some succour to the toiling masses. No matter what degree of success may have actually been achieved by post-independence third world regimes in living up to the promises of the freedom struggle, the very conception of the Fund runs contrary to the objectives of the freedom struggle. To call the Fund an imperialist agency therefore, one does not necessarily have to start with Marxist theory; one just has to look at practical experience.

The remarkable thing about the Fund package however is not just that it re-establishes imperialist hegemony; it does not even achieve the economic success it claims it would. The immediate effect of the effort to cut down 'absorption' via fiscal means is, as we have seen, to squeeze the working people. This comes about, inter alia, through an acceleration in the rate of inflation relative to the rate of growth of money wages; such a squeeze however implies a reduction in demand for a variety of home-produced goods (the reduction in public investment has the same effect) and hence a domestic recession. Another essential ingredient of the IMF package has an exactly identical effect. Devaluation raises the cost of imported inputs which are 'passed on' in the form of higher prices; but if devaluation is to be real, i.e. if the inflation is not to match fully the extent of depreciation of the exchange rate, then the price either of the labour-input or of the home produced agricultural inputs must not rise at the same rate as the overall price-level. In other words, for devaluation to be real, the earnings in real terms of workers and/or peasants must fall. And a reduction in real purchasing power in their hands must mean a domestic recession. Thus, the immediate invariable consequence of an IMF-package is an acceleration in the rate of inflation (relative to money wages) together with a domestic recession. In the short-run, exports in any case cannot rise much, since boosting exports, even if successful, always takes considerable time. Whatever short-run benefits on the balance of payments front that an IMF package brings come therefore from the saving on imports going directly or indirectly into the working peoples' consumption, and into public investment which is also cut back. These savings however are usually more than offset by the simultaneous import liberalisation which the Fund insists on in short-run itself as a part of its 'structural adjustment' towards a more open, 'free market' economy. Such import liberalisation further aggravates recession (via domestic 'de-industrialisation'), but widens the trade deficit. The IMF package therefore, even while squeezing the working people, reducing public investment and causing domestic recession, actually worsens the external deficit; but this worsening is covered by the IMF's loan, and other sources of external finance which become available to a country once private international lenders acquire 'confidence' in it because it is under IMF-tutelage. In the short-run therefore everything worsens but the greater availability of loans keeps the balance of payments problem in check.

The Fund's basic theory is that in the medium-run the country's exports would improve, direct foreign investment would flow in, and a new era of viable and sustainable growth start in the context of an open economy. It is this view which is fundamentally erroneous. For a whole range of goods produced in the third world countries there is in any case little demand in the metropolitan markets. For other goods for which there is demand as well as access into metropolitan markets, e.g. primary commodities, this demand has been growing slowly. For simple manufactured goods where they could compete and where demand has been growing more rapidly, there is limited access for the third world as a whole, though some individual countries might have been accommodated more readily for a variety of strategic and political reasons. For sophisticated, technology-intensive manufactured goods, the export prospect depends entirely on whether multinational capitals which control the market as well as the technology are willing to use third world countries as their production bases, i.e. are willing to locate export-oriented units within third world countries. Here, historically as well as today, the fact remains that while multinational capitals are not over-enthusiastic about shifting production to the third world, there are too many countries in the third world (and now in Eastern Europe) begging them to do so. They can therefore pick and choose; the successes of some of the small East Asian economies have not been and are unlikely to be replicated elsewhere, especially in large, populous countries of the third world which therefore have been and would be left high and dry.

The era of burgeoning exports, and high export led growth, therefore, does not materialise in the medium-term as the IMF promises. The recession which the IMF-package produces in the short-run is not followed by any significant turnaround. In such a case however the debt-increase, both to the IMF itself as well as to other private lenders, which occurs during the period of adjustment puts the balance of payments at the end of the period of adjustment in an even more precarious position than it was at the beginning. The country is faced with fresh 'crises of confidence' among international lenders, has to squeeze its working people even further, and has to undertake further deflationary measures which nullify through a fresh recession whatever little growth the country may have achieved in the interim and even compound the original recession if it has continued. In short, the country gets trapped in a situation of high and ever growing debt, low or even negative growth and declining living standards of the working people, apart from its loss of economic and political sovereignty. The effort to keep pleasing the imperialist countries to get an occasional debt write-off becomes the sole pre-occupation of ruling governments. And indeed democracy itself ceases to have any meaning, since no matter whom the people elect, the governments are compelled to have the same pre-occupation, namely pleasing their imperialist

masters; any government that steps out of line is immediately faced with a 'crisis of confidence' on the part of international lenders, and is soon brought to its knees.

The above is no idle speculation. The Latin American countries which had enjoyed an import-led boom in the seventies and had run up huge debts in the process (the debt build-up was to a considerable extent also used for financing transfer of capital by domestic nationals to the metropolitan centres) found in the early eighties that capital inflows dried up, pushing them into a severe debt trap. Since then, despite a secular absolute decline in per capita incomes caused by drastic recession, despite squeezing out substantial surpluses from an impoverished population to sustain a positive trade balance, they have continued to experience negative current account balance (owing to the burden of interest payments) and have had to appease imperialism in every conceivable way (including quietly supporting the attack on Panama) in order to obtain periodic debt-rescheduling. The hope that the return of democracy to that continent would bring relief to the people has been belied: caught in the debt-bind, the elected democratic governments have behaved in much the same way that the military dictatorships had done before them. The most striking case of course is that of Argentina, which recently elected a Peronist president. Peronism had strong support within the working class and it is this support that put Carlos Menem in office. Once elected however he turned upon the same working class with a fury that was no less severe than that of his predecessors.

To believe that India, because of her size and uniqueness, would have a different experience from Latin America, if she follows the same strategy, is mere wishful thinking. If anything her very size, her very cultural distinctiveness would put her at a greater disadvantage compared even to Latin America. No matter how objectively we prostrate ourselves before imperialism, multinational capital would never consider this strange and enormous landmass inhabited by an entirely different people speaking entirely different languages, a congenial enough place to invest in. And the social turbulence, not to mention the ubiquity of terrorism, that prevails would further dampen whatever meagre enthusiasm for investing here could be summoned up in the metropolitan centres. Our export drive in other words would be nowhere as successful as that of Latin America in the midst of a debt-trap. As a consequence our debt-trap itself would be even more vicious than that of Latin America.

All this is so obvious that it normally should not need repeating, but for the orchestrated media chorus in favour of 'liberalisation' that has suddenly arisen. Our whole experience during the colonial period is a testimony to it. We were virtually an open economy throughout: even the protectionism that was introduced in the inter-war years was on quite a minuscule scale. And yet notwithstanding our abysmally low

wages, foreign capital did not flow into our economy in any substantial amounts to boost our growth rate. In fact, the per capita income during the half-century before independence barely moved up at all. When our freedom struggle put as its objective a de-linking of the economy from the hegemony of metropolitan capital by abridging the so-called 'freedom of the market forces', it did so not because of any ideological blind-spot but because of our felt experience. It is the pretense that experience did not exist and the attempt to turn the clock back which is being ideological.

#### IV

To say all this is not to make out a case for the persistence of the *dirigiste* regime erected in the 1950s. In fact we have seen above that the transition to 'liberalisation', entailing a re-assertion of the hegemony of metropolitan capital, is a result of the contradictions of that regime itself. We thus desperately need economic reforms, but not of the kind dictated by the Fund and the Bank. In other words we have to transcend the dichotomy which is posed before us between a corrupt *dirigisme* on the one hand and the hegemony of metropolitan capital on the other; we have to change the problematic itself. The objectives of the reforms must be to widen the home market; to provide the broadest possible basis for development by ensuring a minimum level of education, health and employment; to prevent the arbitrary use of resources through their greater devolution from the Centre to the States and down to elected Panchayat bodies; to debureaucratise the economy not only through such decentralisation but also by democratising the management of public sector units and introducing greater accountability of the decision-makers at all levels; and above all by insisting on the capitalists' compliance with laws and acceptance of a minimum level of collective discipline. All this would still mean bourgeois development, but bourgeois development on the broadest possible basis. This would not only improve the conditions of the masses far more than the sort of development we have experienced, but also create the best condition for a transition to socialism. Struggle for it therefore is simultaneously a struggle for socialism, as Lenin emphasised repeatedly.

To bring about these reforms however it is essential to forestall the IMF-dictated reforms, and hence to avoid resorting to a large IMF loan. The argument advanced by government spokesmen that there is 'no alternative' to the IMF-loan is absurd. Quite apart from the general point that when it is a matter of defending sovereignty, democracy and the people's living standards, a country should be willing to use any means, it remains the case that the situation can still be managed in a different way. With the import restrictions already in place, which have had favourable effects on the trade deficit, with the

postponement of certain import-intensive but low-priority investment projects, with a re-scheduling (if not pruning) of certain defence-linked imports, with a crash programme of exports, with the mobilization of fresh loans on a medium-term basis from Indian workers abroad and the conversion of some current short-term loans from NRI's to medium term ones, we should be able to manage our external payments with our own efforts.

Meeting the payments crisis by our own independent effort should also enable us to attempt macro-economic stabilisation in a manner not dictated by the IMF. The main means of bringing down the fiscal deficit should be direct taxation, and a reduction in inessential expenditure. Through greater discipline in tax-enforcement, changes in tax laws (relating to the 'Hindu Undivided Family') removing certain kinds of exemptions, and an adjustment of rates for top income brackets, the revenue from income taxation should increase. In addition, it is shocking that there is a virtual absence of wealth-taxation in India. While even advanced capitalist countries like Britain use wealth taxation as a means of retaining a degree of egalitarianism in society, India whose Constitution deems it to be a 'socialist' republic has virtually done away with it. Under the Rajiv government, estate duty was even officially abolished on the grounds that it yielded too little revenue! Even pending the introduction of a comprehensive wealth-tax, there is no reason why taxation of urban property and of capital assets should not be immediately introduced. The former would have the added advantage of dampening to an extent the speculative boom in urban real estate.

With greater resort to direct taxation, the tendency towards garnering revenue from indirect tax and administered price-hikes would have been reversed, which itself would be an anti-inflationary measure. The reduction in the fiscal deficit would dampen inflationary expectations and hence the speculative movement into commodities which would have an additional anti-inflationary effect. Even so however, it is also necessary in addition to protect the poor from the effects of such inflation as would occur. And this is best done through an extension of the public distribution system, both geographically into the rural areas as well as in terms of its commodity coverage. To keep the strain on the exchequer of such an extension of the public distribution system within reasonable limits, there should be an adjustment in the targeting of this system, towards the poor and the toiling people.

In the medium term the focus of any economic reform must be land redistribution, the provision of literacy, health and sanitation facilities (including drinking water) and the development of rural infrastructure. The vital necessity of land reforms is underscored by the fact that even the successful East Asian capitalist economies owe their success inter alia to the post-war land reforms that they had. A thrust

towards land redistribution and greater social expenditures in the rural areas which are best undertaken under the aegis of directly elected Panchayat bodies, is essential not only for widening the home market immediately but also for bringing about a rapid increase in agricultural output (as has happened in West Bengal) which has great potential for direct and indirect employment generation. This would not only broaden the base of bourgeois development in the country but also generate sufficient enthusiasm among the people to make the other components of the reform package e.g., imposing a degree of discipline upon capitalists, feasible.



*Structural Adjustment and the State:  
From Consent to Coercion*

The role of the State in a market society can be understood in terms of two conceptual dualities. The first of these is that of 'reciprocity' and 'redistribution'. A market economy is sustained by the process of 'free' commodity exchange, which presumes a measure of reciprocity. But strict reciprocity obviously fails to provide even a semblance of social equity, particularly in the exchange of labour power for wages. This is a fact that Adam Smith—the putative founder of liberal political economy—clearly recognised.<sup>1</sup> Yet, being firmly committed to the doctrine of free market liberalism, Smith saw no help for this situation.

Adam Smith was unwilling to countenance any form of public intervention in the working of the market. But this stand owed more to his position in the polemical battles of his time, which pitted him against the mercantilist school of State interventionism. Smith was by no means a vulgar apologist for a market society, as has been made out by contemporary liberal economists. He was on the contrary, acutely aware of the harsh inequities of such a society, and his belief in a providential 'invisible hand' was inspired more by supernatural faith than by scientific observation.<sup>2</sup>

The changing exigencies of market society saw State intervention gaining a measure of legitimacy in the post-World War II liberal economic consensus. Yet this redistributive role of the State had strictly defined outer bounds. It is a truism that bears repetition, that the market society is one based on private property in the means of production, and that property is a political and legal right, and not an object.<sup>3</sup> 'Property' in other words, is a right that bestows on the titleholder a pre-emptive claim to the material output of society. Distribution in a market society—or in other words, the relative material entitlements of various sections of society—is determined by this structure of property relations, which imposes the outer bounds to any redistributive action by the State.<sup>4</sup>

This brings up the second of the conceptual dualities that would help in understanding the role of the State in a market society—that

---

\*Journalist, based in Delhi

of 'consent' and 'coercion'. Modern civil society, i.e., an elective democracy, is based upon the consent of its citizens. But this is a doctored consensus, which has to accommodate the pre-emptive claim of private property on the ground floor. This assertion of property rights, as Adam Smith clearly saw, was often to the prejudice of the material entitlements of those with no property except their own labour-power.<sup>5</sup>

The property right has to be safeguarded against any dilution by the demands of the working classes. This was, in the formative years of the market society, achieved through an oppressive series of enactments, the use of State agencies (such as the police) to check any possible assertion of worker militancy, and the denial of the franchise to the working classes.<sup>6</sup>

These overt trappings of a coercive political order are obviously beyond the pale, as far as contemporary liberal theory is concerned. Yet they do surface with remarkable regularity in the less developed parts of the capitalist world. For countries like India, which on the attainment of political sovereignty, adopted most of the institutions and processes of a modern liberal society—such as universal adult suffrage, free trade unionism, and a multipolar press—coercion has taken more subtle forms. This coercive intent is apparent today in the manner in which a forced consensus is being put together on a structural adjustment programme supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The very basis of this consensus—the well-worn argument that there is no alternative—bespeaks an authoritarian logic.

To further understand how a market society transits from consensus to coercion, it may be useful to differentiate between money and material entitlements.<sup>7</sup> In a simplified two-class model of an economy, there would be only two kinds of money entitlements—profits and wages. At any given set of prices, the prevailing levels of profits and wages would confer on the capitalists and workmen, a certain quantum of material entitlements.

To carry this simplified model further, one could take a two-sector economy, consisting of agriculture and industry, and a given set of inter-sectoral commodity transactions.<sup>8</sup> Needless to say, these transactions would be taking place at a given set of prices, and a correlative set of money entitlements for workers and capitalists in both sectors.

If the system were to suffer an extraneous shock—say on account of adverse weather conditions that cut into agricultural output—then peasant proprietors in the agricultural sector would seek to keep their money entitlements constant by bidding up the price of agricultural commodities. This would lead to a pressure on the price of food in the industrial sector, for which workers would presumably seek compensating wage increases. If industrial capitalists were to in turn, adjust prices to keep their money profits constant, then there would be an overall increase in the cost of living. Were peasant proprietors to

initiate another round of price increases to offset this, inflation would rapidly spiral out of control. The correspondence between money and material entitlements would collapse, putting the foundations of civil society under pressure.

The State could forestall this sequence of developments through a number of measures. It would have two main options in such a context, which it could use in combination—running an import surplus, or cutting its own expenditure commitments. The greater the recourse to any one of these options, the less would be the need to enforce the other with any measure of rigour. The specific response of the State in any given context would depend upon the political coalition of social classes that constitutes it, and on the external environment within which the economy exists.

'Deflation', or a drastic curtailment of State expenditure, is ostensibly a device that is neutral between social classes in terms of its impact. But the derivative squeeze on consumption has very different implications for different sections of society. In terms of the four-class two-sector model of the market economy, if all the four classes locked in contention were to enjoy roughly equivalent degrees of influence in determining their shares in the social product, then the entire system would overheat and rapidly reach a state of near collapse. But if one or more of the parties were to be marginal participants in the bargaining process—either by virtue of their intrinsic characteristics, or by virtue of State policy—then the system would be better able to maintain its equilibrium in the face of extraneous shocks.

In other words, if one of the classes involved were to be economically disenfranchised, and reduced to a marginal position as far as the market mechanism is concerned, then the market economy would be able to withstand shocks either from within or without, with far greater resilience. The point highlights the central contradiction of a market society, which Marx was the first to point out—between the political and juridical equality of a liberal democracy, and the inequality and unfreedom of private property. The right of universal adult suffrage is, in the liberal doctrine, the ultimate freedom. It permits the citizens of a country to 'buy' for themselves, the policy orientations that they want, through the periodic exercise of the franchise. But as even some of the more radical among liberal thinkers have pointed out,<sup>9</sup> a regime of private property corresponds to a state of economic disenfranchisement for some, and hence incomplete freedom.

In the Indian context, the sectoral distribution of the national income has changed radically over the years, with industry and services together bulking almost twice as large as agriculture in terms of their contribution. Yet, the sectoral distribution of the population has changed little, if at all. *Per capita* incomes in the agricultural sector have hence, at best stagnated. Together with this, there has been, since the early 1970s, a sustained movement in the terms of trade

against agriculture. This implies that since the early 1970s, at any rate, there has been an 'absolute squeeze' on consumption levels in the agricultural sector, viewed in an aggregate sense.<sup>10</sup> It does not take very great perspicience to conclude from here, that the brunt of this squeeze on consumption, would have been borne by agricultural wage labourers, with peasant proprietors seeking to compensate for terms of trade losses, by cutting back on the wage component of their costs.

The dilemma of the liberal State is that it has to preserve and protect this state of incomplete freedom, while at the same time recruiting the broad mass of the citizenry—including the unfree—to its cause. In the realm of fiscal policy, this means that the liberal State has to maintain an environment (or at least a facade) of relatively open access to economic opportunities. Where the private sector cannot ensure that opportunities expand adequately to keep pace with the aspirations of the broad mass of the people, the state would have to create sufficient such opportunities in the public domain.

The gross capital formation expenditure out of the Central government's budgetary resources increased from around 2 per cent of GDP in the early 1950s, in a fairly sustained manner, to reach the level of 7.5 per cent in the mid-1960s. Public sector employment grew commensurately, virtually doubling between these two points of time. Those were the heady days of the Nehru-Mahalanobis growth paradigm, when the public sector was seeking to achieve the 'commanding heights' of the economy.

Certain disquieting trends were apparent even then, which, in retrospect today, acquire greater significance. Firstly, capital formation in the economy as a whole came to depend almost entirely upon the public sector. Gross domestic capital formation increased from around 10 per cent of the GDP in the early-1950s, to around 16 per cent in the mid-1960s.<sup>11</sup> Virtually this entire order of increase was on account of the public sector. If the rhetoric of the 'commanding heights' had actually been a feature of reality, then this trend would have been unexceptionable. But the reality was that virtually all of the consumer goods sector—and this includes the entirety of agriculture—remained firmly in the private domain.

Employment in the private organised sector grew by a niggardly 40 per cent between the early-1950s and the mid-1960s. Foodgrain output grew from 48 million tonnes in crop year 1950-51 (July-June) to 78 million tonnes in 1964-65. However, against this increase of 62.5 per cent in output, the per capita output grew by only 21 per cent. In the same period of time, the per capita availability of another of the necessities of life—cotton clothing—grew by the order of 32 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

These orders of increase in the availability of most vital necessities may seem modest, but still adequate. But the point to observe is that imports of foodgrain after hitting a trough in the crop year 1954-55—in the heyday of the Community Development Programme—kept

increasing. The situation was paradoxical—in the year 1964–65, when foodgrain output grew by over 10 per cent, imports of foodgrain came to account for over 20 per cent of the country's total import bill. In very few of the years before then, had the country's foodgrain import bill been lower than 10 per cent of the total import bill.

What is the reason for this seeming paradox of significant increases in the domestic production of food coexisting with record levels of food import? The Government of India's Economic Survey for 1965–66 has part of the answer: despite the 'large increase' in food production, it states, 'imports of foodgrains had to be continued in view of the considerable decline in market arrivals. The relative stagancy of foodgrain production during the first three years of the Third Five-Year Plan had led, in all probability, to a depletion of private stocks of foodgrains in the hands of producers, traders, and consumers; the large increase in output which occurred in 1964–65 appears to have reversed this tendency and it is probable that private stocks of foodgrains have been rebuilt during the year' (Economic Survey, 1965–66, page 12).

The costs of accommodating these 'private' impulses were high. The country's foreign exchange reserves were drawn down by over Rs 72 crores in 1964–65. It was the culmination of many successive years of foreign exchange reserves depletion, as India's export earnings failed manifestly to keep pace with its import requirements for both investment and subsistence purposes.

When calamity struck in the shape of two successive monsoon failures in 1965 and 1966, there seemed few options open for the country, except to go in for a major structural adjustment programme. The rupee was devalued by 36.5 per cent in June 1966. And simultaneously, the entire foreign trade policy regime was revamped in a manner no less dramatic than in the Manmohan Singh–P. Chidambaram reforms a quarter of a century later. (Economic Survey, 1966–67, page 45)

Fiscal policy followed a severely contractionary course during this phase of structural adjustment. Gross capital formation expenditure out of Central Government budgetary resources fell from the level of 7.5 per cent of GDP in 1965–66 to just over 6.5 per cent the next year. Largely on this account, the overall budgetary deficit fell from 1.39 per cent of GDP to 0.80 per cent between these two years. With monetary policy also being stringent, the rate of inflation was brought down from 11.6 per cent in 1967–68 to 1.2 per cent the next year.

In the meanwhile, the Congress party had suffered serious reverses in the General Elections of 1967. Large sections of the coalition of social forces built up by Jawaharlal Nehru deserted the Congress party in the disillusionment and despair of the mid-1960s. Parties of very different ideological persuasions gained at the expense of the Congress in 1967. The electoral verdict was not so much a vote for any politico-economic programme, as an expression of disgruntlement with the Nehru-

Mahalanobis growth paradigm, which had been seriously undermined by the mid-1960s crisis.

The Congress retained its hold on power. But it was a party devoid of initiative, hamstrung by its precarious majority in Parliament. The compulsions of fiscal management were, moreover, forcing the Government to cut back sharply on its role as the lead player in economic growth. The Central Government's gross capital formation out of budgetary resources fell to a 15-year low of 4.32 per cent of GDP in 1969-70. The overall budgetary deficit, which had climbed alarmingly in the mid-1960s, was brought back within prudent limits. And as the agricultural situation improved, imports were curtailed, narrowing the deficits on both the merchandise trade and current accounts.

The economic stabilisation of the late-1960s provides the context for the epochal split of the Congress in 1969, and the inauguration of Indira Gandhi's rousingly populist programme of poverty alleviation. Presenting the Union Budget for 1970-71, while holding the finance portfolio, Indira Gandhi asserted that 'any severance of the vital link between the needs of growth and of distributive justice will produce stagnation or instability'.<sup>13</sup> This reaffirmation of the early orthodoxy of Indian planning would have been inconceivable just four years prior, when fiscal stringency seemed to provide little accommodation for populist impulses.

Following the broad orientation set by Indira Gandhi, Finance Minister Y.B. Chavan allocated a sum of Rs 68.5 crore in 1971-72 budget, for various employment schemes aimed at achieving a redistribution of incomes in favour of the disadvantaged rural sections. The sum may seem insubstantial by today's standards. But it must be remembered that this represented an increase in spending on rural employment, from virtually nothing, to the level of about 1.7 per cent of the total revenue expenditure of the Central Government.

The 'garibi hatao' schemes were covered under the head of 'non-plan grants' from the Centre to the States in 1971-72, since they were as yet incipient, and had not been institutionalised within the known parameters of federal fiscal transfers. The next year, these schemes were transferred to the head of grants for 'Central Plan Schemes' implemented by the States. Expenditures under this head grew from Rs 26.07 crore in 1971-72 to Rs 217.35 crore in 1972-73—largely on account of the 'garibi hatao' schemes. Again, if the figures should seem small, it should be borne in mind that the latter sum represented 4.73 per cent of the total revenue expenditure in the year concerned, and that the increase in grants for Central Plan Schemes accounted for 39.57 per cent of the increase in revenue expenditure in the course of the year.

Partly on account of these new anti-poverty initiatives, and partly on account of the hostilities then underway in Bangladesh, the budget deficit grew from the perfectly manageable figure of 0.12 per cent, to 1.83 per cent of GDP between 1969-70 and 1972-73. Clearly, the growth

of real output in the economy was incapable of supporting this vast increase in purchasing power. When the monsoon failure of 1972 led to a sharp drop in the availability of food, pent-up inflationary pressures came surging to the surface. Average wholesale prices of food-grain ruled 16.5 per cent higher in 1972-73 than in the previous year. The overall rate of inflation, measured in terms of the average level of the wholesale price index (WPI), was 10.04 per cent over the year. Between June and September 1972, incensed crowds laid siege to the streets in places as far-flung as the Hindi belt, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab.<sup>14</sup>

Shankar Dayal Sharma, then president of the ruling Congress party, alleged that the agitations were part of a design hatched by the 'four-party alliance' opposed to Indira Gandhi.<sup>15</sup> The initial impulse of the Congress Government was clearly to stay the course. The wholesale trade in wheat was nationalised in April 1973, and the government signalled its intention to do the same with rice, at an unspecified date. Grants for Central Plan Schemes were increased over the earlier year's figure, and amounted to 4.78 per cent of total revenue expenditure in 1973-74.

The oil price shock of October 1973 imparted the death blow to Indira Gandhi's populism. The rate of inflation accelerated to 20.22 per cent in the aggregate, and 18.33 per cent for foodgrain in 1973-74. The year 1974-75 signalled the retreat from 'garibi hataoism'. Grants for Central Plan schemes were cut to Rs 70.25 crore—less than a third of its level the previous year. In proportion to the total revenue expenditure, this head claimed a mere 1.20 per cent in the year—a far cry from the levels touched in the two previous years.

Inflation touched a new peak in 1974-75. The year was one of acute crisis, as the Economic Survey put it, with 'severe inflationary pressures coinciding with highly uncertain outlook for agricultural and industrial output as well as for the balance of payments'. A series of ordinances was issued during the year, to check the expansion of demand by 'curtailing disposable income in the hands of certain classes of people'. First, compulsory deposit scheme was introduced for Government employees, impounding a part of their salaries (including half their dearness allowance) with the Reserve Bank. Second, dividend payments by corporate entities were limited to 12 per cent of the face value of the equity, or to one-third of the after-tax profits, whichever was lower. And third, the compulsory deposit scheme was extended to cover all income-tax assesseees, whose net annual income exceeded Rs 15,000.

On the food policy front, the administrative fiat of nationalisation had failed manifestly in checking speculative tendencies. As the Economic Survey for 1973-74 put it, wheat procurement in the 1973 *rabi* 'fell short not only of the target, but also of the actual procurement during the corresponding period of 1972'. This decline was only partly explained by a loss of output of about 1.5 million tonnes. Clearly, most

of the decline in procurement, and the increase in prices, was on account of a diversion of wheat to speculative hoards. The government had to take this into account, and as the Economic Survey went on (page 18): 'the experience with the procurement of wheat in 1973 had a major impact on the evolution of price policy for the *kharif* cereals'. The administrative fiat of nationalisation was replaced by a policy based on price incentives. Procurement prices for all varieties of paddy were raised by about 30 per cent, and issue prices were revised correspondingly.

The nationalisation of the wheat trade was reversed in the space of a single year. But procurement in the 1974 *rabi* turned out to be dismal, at about 1.9 million tonnes, or about 40 per cent of the abnormally low 1973 figure. The years 1973-74 and 1974-75, saw a total of over 12 million tonnes of foodgrain being imported, and still the government commenced 1975-76 with stocks down to a parlous 3.3 million tonnes. At the levels of inflation prevailing, this stock-holding was patently inadequate to the task of holding the price line.

Subsidies incurred in the public distribution of food tended to increase in an unplanned manner all through these years. As against a budget allocation of Rs 130 crore for food subsidies in 1973-74, the actual expenditure came to Rs 251 crore. The following year, only a small allocation of Rs 100 crore was made—but the actual expenditure amounted to Rs. 295 crore. In a context of rampant inflation, and the neutralization of dearness compensation, the reliance on public food distribution would only have tended to increase, and with it the expenditure on food subsidies too.

That Indira Gandhi should have chosen in June 1975 to suspend democratic political processes, curtail the freedom of the press, and abolish the right to strike through the promulgation of an internal emergency, now seems a logical and historical inevitability. There was no other way open for the liberal State to square the macroeconomic circle. The effort to put additional purchasing power into the pockets of all—to make some sections better off without cutting into the material entitlements of others—was doomed to failure. But in a situation rendered volatile by an external shock as serious as the 1973 oil price increase, the State had to crack down hard to disabuse certain sections of the notion that they could actually improve their lot at the expense of those above them in the scale of income and wealth.

The singular feature of the deflationary package that began to bite deep in the year 1975-76, is that the average level of agricultural prices—as measured by the implicit GDP deflators—fell by over 12 per cent over the previous year. Prices in the manufacturing sector only increased, though marginally. The implications are fairly clear. Though the most visible features of the deflationary package were the freeze on dearness allowance and dividend payments, the decisive component was the squeeze upon purchasing power in the agricultural



sector. Within the agricultural sector, it is conceivable that the nature of the wage bargaining process enabled the peasant proprietor to pass on the burden of adjustment to the wage-earner.

In terms of the political correlates, squeezing the rural poor represents the path of least resistance. Politically inarticulate and economically unorganised, the agricultural work-force in India—as in most developing countries—constitutes the closest approximation today, to what Marx referred to as the 'reserve army' of labour. Modern economic theory has found a somewhat more euphemistic description—in the words of Ragnar Nurkse, countries like India 'suffer from large-scale disguised unemployment in the sense that, even with unchanged techniques of agriculture, a large part of the population engaged in agriculture could be removed without reducing agricultural output'.

Nurkse's conclusion from here was a happy one: 'the state of disguised unemployment implies at least to some extent a disguised saving potential as well'.<sup>16</sup> A part of the surplus labour, Nurkse argued, could be transferred out of the agricultural sector, and set to work on capital formation projects, without any loss of output in the short or medium terms. But the actual experience of India has been very different. The sectoral distribution of national income has changed rather rapidly over time—agriculture now contributes far less to national income than it did in the early years of planning. Yet, the proportion of the work force dependent on agriculture has changed hardly at all. These are circumstances that define the process of economic disenfranchisement—the progressive marginalisation of a certain social class in a manner that makes them incapable of protecting their material entitlements through political action.

Indira Gandhi's package of deflationary measures proved immensely successful in purely economic terms. The budget deficit was brought down from 1.03 per cent of GDP in 1974–75, to 0.52 per cent in 1975–76, and further to 0.18 per cent in 1976–77. The trade balance moved strongly into the black in 1976–77. Aided by large net receipts under the invisibles head—mainly on account of Indian migrant workers in the oil-exporting states of the Arabian Gulf—the current account went into surplus in 1976–77, and maintained that status even the next year.

The political costs of the economic contraction were, however, something else. Indira Gandhi went down to a spectacular electoral debacle in 1977. And it was no coincidence that the Janata Party government constituted that year felt compelled to adopt expansionary policies. Presenting the Union Budget for 1977–78, Finance Minister H.M. Patel spoke of the low rate of growth and its uneven spread, as both cause and consequence of chronic unemployment and underemployment, and emphasised the need to attack poverty directly through public works schemes concentrated in the rural areas.<sup>17</sup>

Outlays on Central Plan schemes were stepped up in 1977-78 to the level of 2.34 per cent of revenue expenditure. In terms of the increase in revenue expenditure in the year, the stepped-up outlays on Central Plan schemes accounted for 11.47 per cent. And after some years of restraint, the overall budgetary deficit moved up abruptly to 1.16 per cent of GDP in the course of the year. The boost to Central Plan schemes was sustained over the next year too, with these outlays coming to account for 2.86 per cent of total revenue expenditure. The overall budgetary deficit was, however contained by a substantial increase in internal borrowings. However, the acceleration of spending on rural employment schemes in 1979-80 coincided with the second of the oil price shocks. The budget deficit shot up to 2.6 per cent of GDP. And inflation crossed the threshold of social tolerance, with the average level of wholesale prices in 1979-80 being 17.12 per cent higher than the previous year.

The Janata Party government disintegrated under the weight of its internal contradictions in 1979. The price of onions was a recurrent motif in Indira Gandhi's victorious election campaign of 1980. She could not have chosen a better metaphor for the hardships inflicted by inflation. Whereas in 1977 the electorate had pronounced an adverse verdict on the Congress Party's deflationary policies, in 1980 it did likewise for the Janata Party's inflationary package.

On her second coming in 1980, Indira Gandhi benefited from the retrospective political wisdom of these alternate phases of fiscal expansion and contraction. She proceeded to inaugurate a quite distinct fiscal regime, which was considerable reinforced and carried forward under her son and political successor, Rajiv Gandhi.

On the face of things, the economic policy regime of the 1980s has been marked by a sustained fiscal expansion. Total public sector outlay grew from around 30 per cent of GDP in 1980-81 to over 40 per cent in 1989-90. Much of this growth in expenditure was financed out of internal borrowings, which grew from just over 5 per cent of GDP in 1980-81 to more than 10 per cent in 1989-90. Interest payments on internal debt have grown commensurately, constricting the range of spending options available to the government.

Despite this, deficit financing has grown untrammelled. Between 1980-81 and 1989-90, the deficit on all budgetary transactions in the economy was in excess of 1.4 per cent of GDP in all but one year. It was in excess of 2.5 per cent in three of these years, and in excess of 3 per cent in two.

In comparison, all through the preceding decade, the budget deficit exceeded 1.4 per cent of GDP in only three years, and 2.5 per cent in only one. Clearly, the 1980s have seen a greater degree of permissiveness with respect to deficit financing than the preceding decade. The crucial point of departure has been that a contractionary mechanism

Figure I  
Gross Capital formation out of Budgetary Resources of Central Government  
(as % of GDP at factor cost)

1950-51	1.43	1963-64	7.75	1977-78	6.51
1951-52	2.15	1964-65	7.32	1978-79	7.36
1952-53	1.97	1965-66	6.55	1979-80	7.06
1953-54	2.42	1967-68	5.20	1980-81	7.37
1954-55	5.10	1968-69	4.89	1981-82	7.56
1955-56	4.97	1969-70	4.32	1982-83	7.81
1956-57	4.70	1970-71	4.76	1983-84	7.90
1957-58	6.77	1971-72	5.11	1984-85	8.44
1958-59	6.75	1972-73	5.65	1985-86	9.17
1959-60	5.74	1973-74	4.68	1986-87	9.34
1960-61	5.65	1974-75	5.49	1987-88	8.75
1961-62	5.98	1975-76	6.55	1988-89	8.24
1962-63	6.84	1976-77	6.52	1989-90	8.54

Source: National Accounts Statistics

Figure II  
Total Public sector outlay, Internal Capital Receipts, and overall Budgetary  
Deficit, 1964-65 to 1989-90 (in proportion to GDP)

1964-65	20.69	2.97	0.66
1965-66	23.32	3.45	1.39
1966-67	22.43	3.40	0.83
1967-68	20.03	2.99	0.80
1968-69	20.11	3.17	0.92
1969-70	19.76	3.28	0.12
1970-71	21.03	3.73	1.07
1971-72	23.83	4.28	1.75
1972-73	24.22	4.37	1.83
1973-74	21.50	3.90	0.95
1974-75	23.40	3.70	1.03
1975-76	26.59	3.84	0.49
1976-77	27.69	5.11	0.18
1977-78	26.48	4.93	1.16
1978-79	29.24	6.44	0.67
1979-80	30.38	4.90	2.60
1980-81	30.14	5.85	2.83
1981-82	30.61	6.64	1.76
1982-83	33.21	8.19	1.48
1983-84	32.71	8.65	1.15
1984-85	35.03	9.03	2.46
1985-86	35.86	9.35	1.47
1986-87	38.70	9.38	3.51
1987-88	38.10	9.99	1.87
1988-89	36.97	10.28	1.45
1989-90	40.39	10.30	3.07

Source: *Economic Survey*, Various Years.

has been built into this fiscal regime, through a sustained policy of import liberalisation. In other words, a part of the excess demand generated in the economy as a result of sustained budget deficits has been vented out into the external sector, as a matter of deliberate policy.

The implications are apparent. The merchandise trade account deficit was in excess of 3 per cent of GDP all through the 1980s, and in excess of 3.5 per cent in all but three years. In contrast, the trade account was in surplus in one year of the 1970s, and in the other nine years, the deficit exceeded 1 per cent of GDP in only four. Similarly, the balance on current account, which was positive in two years of the 1970s, and rarely in deficit by more than 1 per cent of GDP, was running by the second half of the 1980s at well over 2 per cent of GDP.

Balance of payments financing required increasingly high recourse to international capital markets all through the 1980s. This marked a major departure for India, which had always tended to follow a policy of extreme prudence in international borrowing. The country's external indebtedness grew at an annual rate of 13.15 per cent in the 1980s, and the debt servicing ratio tripled to reach the level of 26.3 per cent of total exports of goods and services by 1989. According to the 1991 edition of the World Bank's *World Debt Tables*, India's total external debt in 1989 ranked third highest in the world, next only to Brazil and Mexico. In terms of the growth of total debt stock in the 1980s, Indira had the third highest rate in a sample of 26 medium and large sized economies in the middle and lower income groups. Only China and Nigeria have had higher rates of debt stock growth in the 1980s.

A signal was sent that India intended to dramatically change its orientation towards its external economic relations, when an agreement was concluded in November 1981 for a 5 billion SDR Extended Fund Facility loan from the IMF. According to the letter of intent served on the IMF by the then Finance Minister, R. Venkatraman, India's balance of payments were expected to be under pressure 'for several years to come'.<sup>18</sup> The Government of India, therefore, intended to initiate a programme of structural adjustment which would have as its objective, the resolution of 'the medium-term balance of payments problems by measures to promote higher export growth and efficient import substitution, especially in the energy sector'.

In the event, the objective of import substitution in the energy sector seems fairly well fulfilled. Self-sufficiency in crude oil requirements increased from the level of just over 40 per cent in 1980-81, to almost 66 per cent in 1989-90. The large trade deficits of the 1980s have clearly not been on account of petroleum imports. Non-oil trade has been persistently in deficit all through this decade, unlike most previous years, when the trade account tended to be in surplus with petroleum and its derivatives netted out.

Figure III  
Balance of Payments (all figures in proportion to GDP)

Year	Trade Balance	Current Account Balance	Non-oil trade Balance
1964-65	-2.55	-2.85	-2.25
1965-66	-2.42	-2.70	-2.14
1966-67	-3.30	-3.81	-3.08
1967-68	-2.48	-2.96	-2.25
1968-69	-1.10	-1.50	-0.71
1969-70	-0.48	-0.88	-0.11
1970-71	-0.80	-1.19	-0.46
1971-72	-1.04	-1.36	-0.58
1972-73	-0.54	-0.84	-0.10
1973-74	-0.66	-0.80	0.32
1974-75	-1.46	-1.13	0.27
1975-76	-0.80	-0.08	0.93
1976-77	+0.41	1.50	2.26
1977-78	-0.12	1.51	1.65
1978-79	-1.96	-0.26	-0.18
1979-80	-3.29	-0.75	-0.10
1980-81	-4.88	-1.82	-0.57
1981-82	-4.28	-1.97	-0.65
1982-83	-3.64	-1.45	-0.10
1983-84	-3.16	-1.22	-0.56
1984-85	-3.23	-1.37	-0.63
1985-86	-4.09	-2.53	-1.96
1986-87	-3.59	-2.24	-2.52
1987-88	-3.16	-2.14	-1.77
1988-89	-3.89	-2.98	-2.55

Source: *Economic Survey*, Various years

The Indian Government's confidential memorandum to the IMF in 1981 had forecast that to finance Plan investments, domestic savings would rise from the level of 21.2 per cent of GDP in 1979-80 to 24.5 per cent in 1984-85.<sup>19</sup> The actual record has been that savings stagnated at 21.2 per cent of GDP in 1980-81, fell to 19.4 per cent the next year, and rose marginally to 19.5 per cent the following year, before finishing up at 18.7 per cent in 1984-85. There was some recovery in subsequent years, but the savings rate in 1989-90 stood just marginally above the figure recorded ten years prior.

The decline in savings is in the main attributable to the growing profligacy of government spending. The official Indian memorandum of 1981 had specifically committed the government to restraining the growth in its expenditure.<sup>20</sup> But the actual record has been quite the contrary: the Central Government's current expenditure grew from 9.89 per cent of GDP in 1980-81 to 15 per cent in 1989-90. With revenues being increasingly incapable of meeting current expenditures, the

Central Government has begun to place a considerable draught upon aggregate savings available in the economy. This marks a radical departure from the IMF assessment of 1981, which had concluded that 'central public savings will be broadly sufficient (though) the position of the States is less assured'.

The IMF loan marked a shift in the taxation regime in the economy. The government memorandum had spelt out the salient features of this shift, clearly stating that 'greater emphasis' would be placed on non-tax revenues 'than in the past'. Further, the memorandum went on to place on record the government's intention to hand out 'considerable direct tax relief . . . with the aim of promoting savings and investment'.<sup>21</sup> This would not have much impact for aggregate revenue, since the losses under this head would 'be more than compensated for by an increase in indirect taxes'.

Subsequent events have shown that this was quite simply a recipe for fiscal disaster. In meeting the growing gap between revenues and expenditure, massive recourse has had to be taken to government borrowing and to deficit financing.

All these represent a marked departure from the programme that was agreed to at the time of the 1981 negotiations with the IMF. Though the Indian Government had not, as far as is known, undertaken any specific quantitative commitment regarding deficit financing and market borrowing, the IMF seemed implicitly to think that some such targeting would be in order. In its confidential assessment, the IMF had observed that it would 'be critically important that the authorities' target for public sector savings be achieved and recourse to the banking system to finance the budget be strictly limited'. According to this assessment, budgetary policy between 1981 and 1984 would be so managed by the Indian authorities, 'that reliance on bank financing of the Central Government budget will be about 3 per cent of GDP and gradually declining'.<sup>22</sup>

In the event, the Central Government's borrowings began from well above this figure, and continued rapidly to increase. As a proportion of GDP, these grew from the level of 5.85 per cent of 1980-81 to over 10 per cent in 1989-90—a rate of growth that marks a significant departure from the historical trend. Despite this, the budget deficit has shown a remarkable stickiness at high levels—again quite unlike the 1970s, when a certain cyclical pattern was in evidence.

An inquiry into some of the heads of government expenditure would further reveal radical departures from IMF conditionality. One example would perhaps suffice: the Central Government's subsidy burden has shown an uninterrupted increase, from 1.56 per cent of GDP in 1980-81 to 2.79 per cent in 1989-90. This was simply not envisaged in 1981. The official Indian memorandum then had been very clear on the point that the 'Central Government (intended) to contain, and wherever possible, reduce subsidies even (if) this (entailed) price adju-

Figure IV  
Grants to States for Central Plan Schemes  
(As % of total central revenue expenditure).

1969-70	0.14
1970-71	0.23
1971-72	0.63
1972-73	4.73
1973-74	4.78
1974-75	1.20
1975-76	1.24
1976-77	1.05
1977-78	2.34
1978-79	2.86
1979-80	4.33
1980-81	4.48
1981-82	3.14
1982-83	2.91
1983-84	3.65
1984-85	4.37

Source: Budget Documents (Various Years).

Figure V  
Implicit GDP Deflators for Agriculture and Manufacturing (1970-71 = 100)

Year	Agriculture	Manufacturing
1970-71	100	100
1971-72	102	107
1972-73	120	115
1973-74	147	132
1974-75	164	166
1975-76	144	168
1976-77	155	171
1977-78	167	180
1978-79	167	185
1979-80	198	219
1980-81	222	244
1981-82	238	263
1982-83	256	273
1983-84	278	293
1984-85	296	310
1985-86	315	334
1986-87	344	346
1987-88	384	371
1988-89	413	402

stments' for certain commodities.<sup>23</sup> In its own assessment, the IMF had then expressed broad approval of these policy intentions.

Clearly, there is nothing in the record of the 1980s to suggest even a qualified degree of success in the IMF-supported economic adjustment

programme launched in 1981. The reasons are fairly clear: IMF conditionalities are inconsistent with the practice of electoral democracy in a pluralist milieu. In a polity like India's—where diverse social groups and their sometimes conflicting aspirations are represented in legislative bodies at various tiers of the federal hierarchy—IMF conditionalities are politically infeasible.

To give them the benefit of doubt, neither Indira Gandhi's government, nor the IMF could have been unaware of this when they entered into their mutual accommodation in 1981. Why then did they work out their agreement, and go through the elaborate procedure of setting performance criteria and quantitative targets for various economic variables? A possible explanation could be that the Indira Gandhi regime needed an IMF endorsement before it inaugurated its new fiscal policy orientation in the early-1980s. It has been observed that the conditionalities associated with IMF lending programmes 'have a catalytic effect on commercial inflows of finance', since there has been a 'positive correlation' between IMF support and the inflow of commercial credit.<sup>24</sup> The overt acceptance of IMF conditionalities served India in that it improved the country's status as a potential customer of the overseas commercial banks.

The agreement with India was important from the IMF's point of view too. International commercial banks had seriously over-extended themselves in the 1970s, when inflation was running high on account of the oil-price shocks, and credit was plentiful and cheap, on account of the recycling of petro-dollars from the oil-exporting nations to the western commercial banks. By the dawn of the 1980s, the signs of strain were apparent, with many of the Latin American debtors—like Mexico and Brazil—beginning to manifest their incapacity to service the huge loans incurred in the 1970s. Viable customers must have seemed altogether too few at that stage, and the arrival of a large and seemingly stable country like India on the market, must have come to international commercial banks, as a most welcome development.

Drawings from the IMF contributed significantly to balance of payments financing between 1980–81 and 1984–85. Commercial loans also ran at high levels between these years, while the grant element ceased altogether by 1981–82. After two successive years of foreign exchange reserves depletion in 1980–81 and 1981–82, there was a period of substantial accretion. Even this changed from about 1985–86. The large volumes of foreign loans contracted from this time on have gone hand-in-hand with a massive depletion of foreign-exchange reserves. At the time of the IMF-bailout in January 1991, the foreign exchange reserves stood at below Rs 2,500 crore—barely sufficient to meet three weeks' imports.

In a context when the prospects of capital flows to developing countries are bleaker than ever before, the IMF credit is not likely to be any more than temporary succour. Fiscal austerity now appears



inescapable, and India would soon have to embark upon the road that most countries of Latin America and Africa have been traversing since the early-1980s.

The human, social and political costs of fiscal austerity have been documented with a wealth of illustrations by the recent report of the South Commission, headed by the African statesman, Julius Nyerere. In much of Latin America and Africa, the South Commission observed, per capita income fell in the 1980s, and most vital indicators of quality of life—such as life expectancy at birth, child mortality, and school enrolment deteriorated. Social tensions increased, and institutions of governance fell into turmoil: 'Governments and political systems, unable to deliver basic goods and services to their people, found themselves increasingly rejected and their legitimacy challenged . . . In the face of all these social factors, recourse to oppression and military force was in some cases seen by governments as the only way to keep the situation under some degree of control'.<sup>25</sup>

The South Commission noted that among the few countries that managed to avoid these pitfalls were the two most populous nations of the world—India and China. But it went on to observe ominously that 'the considerable increase' in the external debt of these two nations in the 1980s might 'significantly affect their future development'.

All countries that imagined that they could purchase internal political stability through external commercial credits, have rather quickly been disabused. Submission to the tutelage of the IMF is ultimately the price that they have had to pay. As IMF conditionalities have begun to bite, popular unrest has grown, drawing forth a proportionately repressive response from the State. On this reckoning, it is just a matter of time before the facade of consensus politics in India is ripped aside, and the naked coercive power of the State comes into view.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Reference may be made to the chapter entitled 'Of the Wages of Labour', in *The Wealth of Nations*, (Edwin Cannan edition, the Modern Library, New York, 1937).
2. See for instance, A.L. Macfie, *The Individual in Society: Papers on Adam Smith*, London, 1967, pp 109 ff.
3. C.B. MacPherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Oxford, 1972, essay 1.
4. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1972, page 42: 'the division of labour . . . implies the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative of labour and its products, hence property'. And 'property' in turn, is defined as 'the power of disposing of the labour power of others'.
5. See *The Wealth of Nations*, op. cit., pp 670 ff.

6. Marx's *Capital* (Volume I), Moscow, 1954, Chapter 28, provides the best reference material for this.
7. The term 'entitlements' owes much to Amartya Sen, though the usage here is explicitly political. Sen's notion allows for legal and political underpinnings only as an afterthought. See *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford, 1981; and *Hunger and Entitlements: Research for Action*, World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki, 1987. The following quotation from the latter work conveys the essence of the problem with Sen's concept: 'The problem of world hunger is not a purely economic one . . . . Even the notion of entitlement, which has obvious economic content, cannot escape having legal connotations, political implications, and social relevance'.
8. The following account is loosely, and rather unrigorously, based upon the model outlined by Prabhat Patnaik, 'Disproportionality Crisis and Cyclical Growth: A Theoretical Note', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, February 1992
9. MacPherson, op. cit., essay 6.
10. Prabhat Patnaik, 'Recent Growth Experience of the Indian Economy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, May 1987.
11. Computed from Central Statistical Organisation, *National Accounts Statistics*, (New Series), 1989.
12. All computations made on the basis of figures presented in Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey*, (Various years). All figures in the following treatment are taken from this source, unless otherwise mentioned.
13. Ministry of Finance, *Union Budget Speeches*, 1948-49 to 1990-91.
14. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1972-73
15. Ibid.
16. Ragnar Nurkse, *Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries*, Oxford, 1953, pages 32 and 37.
17. Ministry of Finance, op. cit
18. Government of West Bengal, *The IMF Loan: Facts and Issues*, Calcutta, 1981, page 20. This volume puts together a series of Washington-based reports which appeared in *The Hindu*, and which presented a fairly authentic cross-section of the confidential memoranda and letters that were changed between the IMF and the Indian Government, prior to the loan being concluded.
19. Ibid, page 30.
20. Ibid, page 34.
21. Ibid, page 32.
22. Ibid, page 42.
23. Ibid, pages 33 and 43.
24. Graham Bird, 'Balance of Payments Adjustment and Financing in Developing Countries', in V.R. Panchamukhi et al (ed), *Money and Finance in World Economic Order*, New Delhi 1987, pp 226-7.
25. South Commission, *The Challenge to the South*, Oxford, 1990, page 65.

SUSHIL KHANNA\*

## *International Trade and Debt: India in the Eighties*

The balance of payments crisis that has necessitated the IMF guided structural adjustment programme took many observers of the Indian economy by surprise. It was well known that India had been unusually conservative in commercial borrowing from international banks abroad even during periods of pressure on its foreign exchange reserves, like after the oil shocks, and had cut its imports to match the availability of concessional credits from multilateral institutions like the World Bank. This had been a costly strategy in the eyes of many critics, and perhaps slowed down the rate of investment. Thus, when the international debt crisis broke in the early 1980s, Indian policy makers were patting themselves on the back and pointing to the low debt servicing ratios as signs of economic strength and prudent management. But during the brief span of few years the scenario has undergone a radical change. During the 1980s, India's foreign debt has risen by about 300 per cent to touch the \$ 70 billion mark by 1989, and recent reports mention a figure of \$ 81 billion for 1991. The rising cost of servicing this debt has eroded the economy's capacity to sustain growth and has mortgaged the future of the country to international bankers and the transnational corporations. In other words, though the total foreign liabilities of the country since Independence to 1983 were within manageable limits of \$ 28.7 bn, during a brief span of 6-7 years the country accumulated additional \$ 40 bn in debts. Not only was the speed of build up of these liabilities astounding, its composition too underwent a structural change with short term and commercial borrowings constituting a greater proportion of the total liabilities.

This paper hopes to trace the major trends and policies pertaining to foreign trade and balance of payments during the eighties in a bid to appreciate the factors that led to the balance of payments crisis and throw light on the probability of success of the structural adjustment programme.

---

\* Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta

## FOREIGN TRADE REGIME BEFORE THE EIGHTIES: A BACKGROUND

The Indian economy has for a long time enjoyed very high rates of protection. The foreign trade regime comprised an elaborate system of controls, prohibitions and high tariffs, often exceeding 100 per cent. This system was designed to channelise scarce foreign exchange into pre-determined sectors chosen by the national planners and to prohibit the production of luxury goods in the economy.

The underlying assumption of this foreign trade regime (FTR) was the 'export pessimism' of the 1950s, which was based on the belief that Third World countries like India faced inelastic demand for their exports (mainly primary products). Given this assumption, the only way to industrialise was to rapidly substitute imports of manufactures from advanced countries with domestic production. Hence, the strategy of import substituting industrialisation was partly an outcome of foreign exchange constrained economic development.

In recent years, the critics of this strategy have been rather vocal. They point to the relatively better growth record of export oriented economies of the Pacific Rim, and argue that the excessive protection has spawned an inefficient industrial sector, has discriminated against exports and has made it difficult to realise the growth potential of the economy<sup>1</sup>. The low and declining share of exports in India's national product, the persistent balance of payments disequilibrium and the rising capital-output ratios are all attributed to the FTR<sup>2</sup>. India, they argue, has neither been able to transform its economy nor eliminate poverty because the FTR and import substituting industrial policy have spawned a system of controls, quotas and prohibitions which have distorted the incentives to producers and encouraged rent seeking activities.<sup>3</sup>

In response to these criticisms, the Indian policy makers have begun to liberalise the FTR and the industrial policy in the eighties. In the latter, the emphasis has shifted from planned targets of output and investment to market determined industrial investment. Given the skewness of incomes and assets in India, it is hardly surprising that a host of goods demanded by the more affluent sections of the society are being produced with consumer durable sector leading the growth. Since many of these products and industries have to rely on imported capital goods and intermediates, the FTR was liberalised with the gradual shift from license/quota regime to one based on tariffs. Several thousand products have been placed on what is called OGL (Open General Licence); tariffs on capital goods have been lowered and access to imported intermediates made easier. Through this, the policy makers hoped to modernise several sectors like the automobile, engineering goods, telecom etc., improve India's international competitiveness and raise the industrial rates of growth.

The government spokesmen claim that the liberalised regime has pushed up rates of growth in the industrial sector since 1980, checked smuggling of consumer durables, and through providing access to international inputs and technology has brought about a rapid growth of exports of manufactures.

On the other hand, the critics of the liberalisation strategy argue that this new policy has spawned a host of import-intensive assembly plants producing consumer, durables for the affluent, widened the trade gap and led the Indian economy into debt trap.

The object of this short note is to critically examine the recent trends in India's foreign trade and balance of payments positions. What are the factors behind the rapid build up external liabilities? Is it the new trade regime that is responsible for the disequilibrium; or was the second oil shock to blame? What are the reasons for the failure of exports to finance the imports? Was there a reduction in multilateral flow of resources? Or were there other factors responsible for the crisis?

#### INDIA'S FOREIGN TRADE IN THE EIGHTIES

To answer the questions above, it is necessary to critically examine the trade performance in the eighties. This is easier said than done, since detailed trade data are not easily available. What complicates the picture more is the gradual decline in the value of the rupee, as the new trade regime tried to enhance the export incentive through gradual and steady devaluation of the rupee, often at rates exceeding the rates of domestic inflation. And then there are the well known discrepancies in the trade data from Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) and the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) data on trade as given in the balance of payments statistics.

To decipher the picture, we have converted all data in US \$ equivalent at the average rates. RBI gives BOP data both in rupees and dollars and DGCIS data has been converted into dollars using the same rate of exchange.

The decade of eighties opened with the aftermath of the second oil shocks. This pushed up India's trade deficit from Rs. 1843 crore or \$2239 million in 1978-79 to Rs. 5756 crore or \$7.3 bn in 1980-81. The value of POL imports surged from \$2049 mn. (Rs. 1681 cr.) in 1978-79 to \$ 6659 mn (Rs. 5266 cr.) in 1980-81 as reported by DGCIS. At the beginning of the decade, petroleum and chemical fertilisers constituted 53 per cent of India's imports valued at about \$15.8 bn. Though the second oil shock was not as severe as the first, like the 1970s there was no commodity boom to offset its impact. In contrast, the advanced economies went through a recession in the 1980-83 period and the world trade and commodity prices were depressed. India was forced to borrow from IMF under the Extended Fund Facility.

Fortunately crude oil from the Bombay offshore fields began to flow soon and the net POL imports were cut. Domestic production of petroleum rose from 10.5 mn. tonnes in 1980–81 to 29 mn. tonnes by 1984–85<sup>4</sup>. As domestic refineries were not able to process the heavier crude from off-shore fields, about 5–7 mn. tonnes of crude oil was exported or swapped with products or lighter crude. By 1984–85 petroleum exports touched a peak of \$ 1.5 bn (Table I). If one considers the DGCIS data, net value of POL imports (POL imports– exports) declined from \$ 6624 mn. or 42% of total imports in 1980–81 to \$3153 bn (only 20% of total imports) in 1983–84.

Despite this decline in the volume and value of net POL imports there was only a marginal impact on the trade deficit. The total level of imports in the first 5 years of the decade (i.e. 1980 to 1985) showed no such decline and hovered near the \$ 15.8 bn figure of 1980–81. (Table I). The decline in the share of POL imports should have pushed down the deficit by about \$2.5– 3.0 bn per year by 1984. But the gains made were offset by the surge in imports of intermediates and components and capital goods for a host of new industries now opened to private sector under the liberal industrial policy (Table II). These were largely in the consumer durable sector, producing automobiles, two-wheelers, white goods and computers. The liberalisation of project imports like power equipment and fertiliser machinery, as well as electronic machinery (computers etc.) had a major impact. The share of the capital goods in India's imports rose from 15 per cent of total imports to 33 per cent by 1986–87 (Table II). This was in contrast to the preceding decade when imported capital goods were being increasingly substituted with domestic production.

Along with this, there has been a sharp rise in the import of components and intermediates as output of many new consumer durables surged. These new imports, estimated at about \$2 bn by some economic journalists, eroded the foreign exchange saved from increasing domestic supplies of petroleum, chemical fertilizers etc.

The shift in the composition of the import basket was accompanied by a shift in the direction of trade. In 1980 about 40 per cent of the imports came from OPEC and East Europe. By 1988, the share of these two regions had fallen to 20 per cent. North America too saw a marginal decline in its share to 13 per cent. In contrast, Japan improved its share of the Indian market from 6 to 9 per cent. But the most significant penetration was achieved by the EEC. The share of EEC in India's imports went up from 21 per cent in 1980 to 25 per cent in 1983 to 32 per cent by 1988. If petroleum imports are excluded, EEC share in India's imports rises to 38 per cent<sup>5</sup>. This is at least 3 times larger than any other trading bloc.

Hence, the changes in the industrial policy and the FTR pushed up India's imports to more than offset significant savings in the import of oil, fertilizers etc. The liberal import policy for capital goods and inte-

Table I  
India's Foreign Trade 1980-90  
(units: million \$)

Year	RBI Data			DGCIS data			DGCIS data		
	Exports	Imports	Balance	Exports	Imports	Balance	Non-petrlm Exports	Non-petrlm Imports	
1980-81	8316	15862	-7546	8486	15869	-7383	8451	9210	
1981-82	8659	15484	-6825	8704	15187	-6483	8423	9401	
1982-83	9453	15428	-5975	9113	14796	-5683	7830	8659	
1983-84	9834	15572	-5737	9448	15310	-5862	7910	10619	
1984-85	10059	15713	-5654	9885	14422	-4537	8352	9872	
1985-86	9463	17298	-7835	8908	16067	-7159	8374	11989	
1986-87	10420	17740	-7320	9743	15736	-5993	9414	13536	
1987-88	12646	19816	-7170	12094	17163	-5069	11587	14014	
1988-89	14257	23618	-9361	14006	19125	-5119	13649	16116	
1989-90	16956	24729	-7773	16626	21268	-4642	16182	17500	
1980-85 avrg	9264	15612	-6348	9127	15117	-5990	8193	9552	
1986-90 avrg	12748	20640	-7892	12275	17872	-5597	11841	14631	

Source: Reserve Bank of India, *Annual Report*, various, Bombay and India, *Economic Survey*, New Delhi.

Table II  
Structure of Indian Imports

	1980-81	1983-84	1986-87
1. Petroleum, etc.	41.9	30.5	14.0
2. Fertilizer & Chemicals	11.9	10.3	14.8
3. Cereals, food etc.	3.0	6.4	3.4
4. Raw materials & intermediates	24.0	29.3	31.7
5. Capital goods	15.2	21.0	32.3
6. Others	4.0	2.5	3.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Computed from data in Govt. of India, *Economic Survey 1989-90*, New Delhi, 1990

intermediates raised the share of these two groups in the total imports. This changing composition of imports also undermined the importance of traditional trading blocks like Eastern Europe and OPEC and saw the increasing penetration of the Indian market by the EEC and Japan.

On the other hand, exports were entirely stagnant during the 1980-85 period. If one subtracts the petroleum exports which were a swap for imported products, exports during the first six years of the decade hovered around the \$8.3 bn. mark. Thus the export growth was zero or negative during a period when the country was reeling under the impact of the second oil shock and a liberalised trade and industrial policy.

The latter half of the eighties saw a surge in Indian exports that was in many ways unprecedented. For the first time, exports began to grow in dollar terms at rates far higher than the growth in GDP or industrial production. During the five years 1985-86 to 1989-90, total exports doubled from \$ 8.9 bn (in 1985-86) to \$ 16.6 bn in 1989-90; a compound growth rate of 13.3 per cent per annum. Thanks to this rise in exports the trade deficit as shown by the DGCIS data *contracted* marginally from \$ 6 bn. to \$ 5.6 bn per year during the second half of the decade. In sharp contrast to this, the RBI data present a picture that is contrary: It is well known that during the eighties RBI data on imports diverged substantially from the DGCIS data. According to the balance of payments data of the RBI the imports rose from about 17.7 bn in 1985-86 to \$ 24 bn. by 1989-90. The average trade deficit per year, according to the RBI series, *widened* from \$ 6.3 bn. to \$ 8 bn. per annum during the second half of the decade (Table I).

If one takes a linear trend (Table III), exports grew by 16.1 per cent per annum during the 1985-90 period according to DGCIS data and 14.8 per cent as shown by the RBI data. This growth was achieved with the simultaneous phasing out of the petroleum exports as domestic refineries developed the capacity to refine the Bombay High crude. For



Table III  
Growth Rate of Exports and Imports 1980s

Period	RBI Data	DGCIS Data (percent per annum)
Export Growth		
1980/81-1989/90	6.95	6.54
1983/84-1989/90	9.36	9.64
1985/86-1989/90	14.80	16.11
Import Growth		
1980/81-1989/90	5.27	3.14
1983/84-1989/90	8.35	5.77
1985/86-1989/90	10.01	7.56

Computed from Table I above. Based on semi-log linear fit.

the decade as a whole the export was as high as 6.5- 6.9% as revealed by DGCIS data and RBI data respectively. The excellent performance during the latter half of the decade raised the overall export growth during the entire decade.

If one considers the DGCIS data, the imports for the decade as a whole grew at 3.1% p.a. and at 7.56% during the second half of the decade witnessed. Given the fact that the discrepancy in the import figures between the RBI and DGCIS is much larger, the RBI data show an import growth of 5.3% p.a. for the period 1980-81 to 1989-90 and a growth of 10% p.a. for the period 1985-86 to 1989-90. Both the series reveal a much higher rate of growth of exports to imports, though in case of RBI data the difference is narrower.

The surge in exports was led by two broad product groups. Amongst India's traditional exports, textiles and apparels, gems and jewellery and leather and footwear experienced higher than average growth rates. Taken together these product groups had a combined weightage of about 52 per cent in India's dollar exports in 1988-89. But the growth was not confined to these traditional product groups. Surprisingly, exports of drugs and chemicals, base metal and products (mainly steel and steel products and tools), machinery and electrical appliances and miscellaneous and project goods experienced high growth during the 1983-84 to 1988-89 period. The combined 1988-89 weightage of these so-called non traditional product groups was about 18 per cent (Table IV). In other words, buoyancy in exports was fairly widespread across a wide spectrum of industries and several new commodity groups like chemicals, metal products and machinery were becoming important areas of export growth.

Table IV  
Growth Rate of Commodity Exports (in dollars)

Commodity Group	(Percent per annum)		
	1983/84-88/89	1985/86-88/89	1988/89 Weights
Animals and animal products	4.6	8.8	3.83
Vegetable products	3.2	-6	11.15
Vegetable and animal fats	-33.4	-4.9	0.07
Beverages and tobacco	6.1	5.8	3.11
Mineral products	-15.7	-1.2	7.52
Chemical and allied industries	2.2	35.9	6.78
Plastics and rubber	3.3	12.3	0.83
Hides and leather products	15.3	19.7	5.23
Wood and cork	0.8	2.1	0.10
Paper and paper products	5.1	9.1	0.19
Textile and textile articles	8.7	17.7	22.70
Footwear and headgear	15.5	13.1	2.22
Stone, cement and ceramics	5.9	22.3	0.38
Gems and jewellery	19.2	29.3	21.73
Base metal and products	14.4	33.4	3.54
Machinery and electronics	22.9	31.1	5.30
Transport equipment	-4.0	0.5	1.80
Instruments, clocks etc.	22.5	30.7	0.60
Miscellaneous manufactures	6.1	17.8	0.33
Miscellaneous and project goods	13.9	25.5	2.01
TOTAL	7.57	15.7	100.00

Note: Growth rates computed using the model  $\ln Y = a + bt$ , where Y is the dollar value of exports in each product group, based on revised National Trade Classification.

Source: Computed from DGCIS export data as reported in CMIE, *Foreign Trade Statistics of India*, Sept. 1990 & 1991, Bombay.

Though the domestic incentive structure undoubtedly played a role in this surge in exports, the external environment too was extremely favourable. The advanced capitalist economies soon recovered from the short recession (1980-83), and world trade once again began to grow at a very high rate. During the 1985-89 period, developing countries' volume exports rose by 9.5 per cent per annum. South and South-East Asia registered export growth rates of 15 per cent<sup>6</sup>. Thus Indian export growth was exceptional by historical trends and was in line with export expansion experienced by the fast growing economies of Asia. Undoubtedly, this achievement was aided by the extremely favourable international trade conditions.

It is clear that the opportunity provided by the import substitution achieved in the petroleum sector was frittered away by the new trade

and industrial policies. There was a gradual opening of the domestic market and a gradual shift in the structure of industrial output towards more import-intensive manufactures, mainly to satisfy the pent up demand amongst the rich for consumer durables, and the opening of the infrastructure sector to foreign capital goods. However, even this should not have caused any serious BOP disequilibrium as a favourable trade environment, new export incentives, especially the withdrawal of income tax on export profits and gradual depreciation of the rupee, pushed up exports to a new growth path. As Table III shows, export growth was higher than import growth for the decade as a whole, irrespective of whether we use the RBI or the DGCIS data. It needs to be pointed out that the difference in export and import growth rate is far lower in case of RBI data, and substantial in case of DGCIS data. But more of this later!

Given this exceptional export performance, why did India fail to surmount its balance of payments crisis? For an answer to this riddle we now turn to the overall BOP position in the eighties.

#### FOREIGN DEBT AND BALANCE OF PAYMENT

It is well known that India's foreign debt grew significantly during the 1983-90 period. Total foreign liabilities rose from \$ 29 bn. in December 1983 to \$ 70 bn. by 1989 and further to \$ 78 bn. by end of 1990.

Table V presents data on India's balance of payments position in dollars as reported by the Reserve Bank of India. It also presents the trade deficit as shown in the DGCIS data for purposes of comparison (from Table I).

The eighties was a period when India enjoyed large surpluses on the invisibles account, thanks to the large transfer payments from Indian workers abroad. Along with the transfer payments, earnings from tourists, miscellaneous receipts were also buoyant. Through the decade, gross invisible receipts were of the order of \$ 6 to 7 bn. These large payments ensured that the surplus on the invisibles account was about \$ 3 bn. during the first half and about \$ 2 bn. in the latter half of the decade when the rising interest cost on the debt began to eat into the surplus.

In the capital account, multilateral and bilateral assistance was also rising during the eighties. Though the share of IDA assistance in India's total aid flow declined from 40 per cent to 19 per cent by the end of the decade, there was a corresponding rise in the IBRD assistance. The total external assistance rose from about \$ 1.6 bn. to 3.3 bn. by the end of the decade. (The figures in Table V show a much larger flow during the 1980-83 period due to clubbing of \$ 4.4 bn. IMF assistance under the extended facility with other flows.)

Table V  
India's Balance of Payments

	1980-81	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-1989	Cumltv. 1983-89
									(\$ million)
Trade Deficit (DGCIS data)									
(A) CURRENT ACCOUNT									
1. Trade Balance	-7383	-5683	-5882	-4539	7159	5993	-5069	-5119	-33,759
2. Invisible:	-7546	-5976	-5678	-5653	-7835	-7320	-7170	-9361	-43,017
(i) Receipts	7448	5847	6666	6933	6436	6475	7156	7545	41,211
(i) Payments	1997	2712	3176	3696	3469	3717	4840	5373	-24,271
Net	5451	3135	3490	3237	2967	2758	2316	2172	+16,940
A. CURRENT A/C (Net)	-2095	-2841	-2188	-2399	-4845	-4562	-4853	-7188	-26,035
(B) CAPITAL ACCOUNT									
3. Private (net)**	122	241	714	1020	1924	2056	2248	2583	+10,545
4. Govt. Misc (net)***	-298	-511	200	1115	1093	2603	2824	4070	-11,905
5. External Assistance	2685	4193	3173	1825	2028	2392	3435	3356	+16,209
6. Amortisation Payments	-874	-717	-783	-764	-1198	-2379	-2785	-2710	-10,619
7. IMF Repurchase	-9	..	-70	-128	-206	-526	-932	-1068	-2,930
8. Banking (net)	16	70	175	-162	152	-55	57	-183	-16
9. Errors	-200	210	-474	272	474	-101	-731	140	-420
TOTAL DEFICIT	-652	646	748	779	-577	-573	-738	-1000	-1361
Financed by:									
Change in reserves	652	-646	-748	-779	577	573	738	1000	+1361

Source: India, *Economic Survey 1989-90* (Delhi: 1990)

\* includes transfer payments by non-resident Indians in 'receipts' and interest payments on all debt in 'payments'.

\*\* includes NRI deposits, commercial borrowings by private sector and portfolio investment etc.

\*\*\* includes external commercial borrowings of the public sector and loans guaranteed by the Central Government.

Substantial funds were also attracted from non-resident Indians in the foreign currency and rupee accounts (FCNRA & NRRA). These were insignificant in the first half of the decade; but from 1985 about \$ 2 bn. additional deposits were being attracted each year. Most of these were long term deposits. By March 1989, more than \$ 10 bn. was accumulated.

Were these enlarged flows not adequate to meet any gap on the trade account? If one takes the DGCIS data India had a cumulative trade deficit of \$ 33 bn. during the six year 1983-89 period. About half of this deficit was financed by the \$ 17 bn. surplus on the invisibles account. That left only \$ 16 bn to be financed and this could have been easily achieved through the external assistance. Of course this still left about \$ 10 bn. for amortisation of past borrowings (about 40 per cent of this was to the IMF for the loan contracted in 1980-82). Accreditation of about \$ 10 bn. in private capital flows (mainly NRI deposits) was adequate to meet this liability. Hence, if the trade deficit in the 1983-89 period was merely \$ 33 bn. as shown by the DGCIS data, the surpluses on the invisibles account could meet half the deficit, and inflows of external assistance (to use the jargon of the Economic Survey) were adequate to meet the rest. But obviously DGCIS figures do not correctly reflect the trade account.

As Table I above shows, as far as exports go the differences between the DGCIS and RBI data are not large. This is also true of the import figures in three or four years. But from 1984-85, RBI and DGCIS data on imports show wide divergence. This difference is more than \$ 1.2 bn. in 1984-85 and rises to \$ 4.5 bn. by 1988-89. Surely this divergence cannot merely be explained as due to the fact that 'RBI data are on payment basis while DGCIS data are based on arrival of goods at customs'.<sup>7</sup> These differences in the two sets of import data inflate the trade deficit by a hefty \$ 10 bn. during the 1983-90 period, i.e., from \$ 33 bn. to \$ 43 bn. (Table V). This increase in deficit is no longer easily financed by the surpluses on the invisibles account and the so-called external assistance. This gap required additional borrowings from some other source, and transnational banks were approached for what is called 'commercial borrowings'. During the 1984-85 period India borrowed a total of \$ 12 bn. from such sources (Table VI) with disastrous consequences in days to come.

In order to seek an answer to the riddle one has to discount the trade figures published by the DGCIS. Obviously there are transactions in the trade account and perhaps in the capital accounts of balance of payment that are not being reported.

The real reason for this sharp rise in India's balance of payments deficit is probably the large imports of arms and military hardware during the 1983-89 period. In these seven years India emerged as the world's largest importer of military equipment, even ahead of Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Table VII). The value of armaments imported increased several fold during the eighties as compared to the earlier decade

**Table VI**  
**External Commercial Borrowings**

(\$ mill.)		
Year	Approvals	Utilisation
1980-81	1312	NA
1981-82	1342	"
1982-83	2096	"
1983-84	1049	"
1984-85	1602	1238
1985-86	1389	1493
1986-87	1092	2437
1987-88	2047	1500
1988-89	2979	2809
1989-90	3290	2520
<b>Total 1984-89</b>		<b>11997</b>

Source: CMIE, *Basic Statistics Relating to Indian Economy*, Bombay 1991.

when they were of the order of \$ 300-400 million; accelerating since 1986 to touch the \$ 3.5.- 4 bn. mark. One must note that the data in Table VII value these imports at constant 1985 dollars and since more than two-thirds of the deliveries took place after 1985, it is likely that in current prices the value of imports was higher than that shown in Table VII. Even at constant prices, imports were more than \$ 20 bn.

**Table VII**  
**Three Leading Importers of Weapon Systems**

(\$ mill. at 1985 dollar)			
Year	Iraq	India	S.Arabia
1983	3003	1757	1121
1984	3940	1016	862
1985	2871	1876	1447
1986	2447	3683	2395
1987	4247	4585	1956
1988	2005	3383	1770
1989	418	3819	1196
<b>Cumulative</b>			
1983-1989	18,931	20,119	10,747

Source: SIPRI, *World Armament and Disarmament 1988 & 1990*, OUP, London

Stockholm Peace Research Institute reports<sup>8</sup> that India diversified its imports away from East Europe after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The sharp increase in magnitude and the sophisticated

nature of the weapon systems acquired followed a reassessment of the regional security environment by defence planners in Delhi. They were particularly sensitive to a pattern emerging in regional politics where domestic instability was followed by foreign military intervention. The 1978 coup in Afghanistan and revolution in Iran were followed by Soviet intervention and the outbreak of Iran-Iraq war respectively, and the creation of the US Central command. The Indian defence strategists perceived a need to respond to medium and long term extra-regional challenges and to reduce their dependence on the USSR as the major source of hardware and technology. Given this perception it is not surprising that the Soviet share in Indian arms procurement dropped sharply since the early 1980s<sup>9</sup>.

The main beneficiaries of the Indian efforts to diversify its sources of military hardware and technology have been Sweden and the EEC countries. During these 6 years (1983-88) India acquired a new aircraft carrier, several squadrons of Mirage, Jaguar and Sea Hawk and Sea King aircraft, armaments for these like missiles, radar etc. from UK and France while W. Germany bagged the controversial order for submarines. The purchase of Bofors artillery from Sweden is too well known. Though SIPRI does not provide value of supplies by source it is difficult to estimate what has been the share of EEC suppliers in the \$16 bn worth of arms India imported. It is our guess that at least 50 per cent of these orders were cornered by the EEC suppliers. Western Europe was the single largest beneficiary of this diversification and supplied India with artillery, armoured vehicles, aircraft and submarines.

It may be pointed out that the difference in the two series of imports (viz. DGCIS and RBI) is merely \$ 10 bn. During the 1983-89 period while the SIPRI data show a much larger level of arms imports. This is because, not all military transactions are omitted from the DGCIS data. Some of the imports of components, spares and allied equipment like electronics are reflected in the DGCIS data. However, a complete answer to the riddle may not easily be available. It is our assumption that SIPRI data, being well recognised to be an authentic source, fairly accurately reflects India's import of military hardware.

#### THE CRISIS

As we saw above, arms imports substantially increased the import bill during the latter half of 1980s and led to a substantial rise in the commercial borrowings of the Government of India. This had the impact on the composition of the total foreign debt of the country. The share of NRI bank deposits and commercial borrowings in the total outstandings rose to 37.5 per cent or more than \$ 26 bn. Of these, the share of short-term borrowings (less than one year) had substantially risen to \$ 7.7 bn. and now constituted more than 11 percent of the total debt (Table VIII). In addition, a substantial proportion of NRI deposits

came up for renewal every year and were sensitive to perceptions about India's credit-worthiness.

Table VIII  
India's Debt and Liabilities Outstanding

(US \$ million)

	End Dec.			Increase
	1983	1986	1989	1983-1989
1. ODA	7,728	9,808	11,711	3,983
2. Multilateral Aid				
(i) Concessional	8,756	11,496	13,188	4,432
(ii) Non-concessional	1,599	3,272	7,292	5,693
3. IMF Credit	3,698	4,274	1,892	-1806
4. Non Bank trade claims	1,426	2,493	3,284	1,858
(short term)	(599)	(997)	(1358)	(759)
5. Guaranteed Bank claims	373	1,009	2,176	1,803
6. Other Bank claims	3,976	8,514	23,878	19,455
(Short term)	(1,437)	(2,905)	(6,472)	(5,035)
7. Non Bank deposits	447	826	@	@
8. Other Claims	1,207	1,623	6274	5067
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,210</b>	<b>43,405</b>	<b>69,695</b>	<b>40,485</b>

Source: OECD, External Debt Statistics, Paris, 1989

@ included in 'other bank claims'.

The Gulf crisis in the summer of 1990 added to the woes. The oil price rose and added Rs. 5180 crores (\$ 2887 million) to the current account. In addition there was a sharp decline in the private transfer payments from the Gulf region. The Reserve Bank of India blames this too on the Gulf crisis<sup>10</sup>. The truth is that with the invasion of Kuwait, many Indian workers returned to India with all their savings and those in other Gulf states tried to transfer their savings to India. For reasons best known to RBI, Indian commercial banks declined to accept any of the Gulf currencies and for a few weeks even the savings of returning workers were not converted to Indian rupees. Thus, the opportunity to attract several billion dollars equivalent of savings were diverted to other off-shore centres.<sup>11</sup>

There was a precipitous fall in invisible receipts, travel and tourism. The loss of confidence resulted in the end of commercial lending by transnational banks to India and an erosion in the accruals under NRI deposits. The short term deposits were first to be withdrawn. The new commercial loans declined from \$ 1379 million in 1989-90 to all low of \$ 341 million in the first 6 months of 1990-91 and to a mere \$ 15 million in the second half<sup>12</sup>. The additional Non



Resident deposits further declined from about \$ 1306 million in 1989-90 to \$ 229 million in 1990-91.

During 1990-91, the country was forced to deplete its reserves to meet the normal requirements. The total foreign exchange reserves declined by more than \$ 1.1 bn. despite a borrowing from the IMF of \$ 1814 million. An additional \$ 1.1 bn reserves were depleted in the first quarter of 1991-92. The dangerous strategy of relying on short term borrowings from international private banks made the entire BOP situation extremely vulnerable. The opportunity provided by the Gulf crisis to attract savings kept in these centres by immigrant workers was lost. Borrowings from IMF and other multilateral aid agencies were the only answer if India did not want to default on its re-payment obligations.

#### PROSPECTS

In conclusion, it can be said that the recent deterioration in India's balance of payments situation was due to the manner in which India's balance of payments was managed during the eighties. There were extremely favourable factors like the increasing domestic availability of petroleum and rising transfer payments. Export growth was unprecedented and if sustained could have led to an end to persistent large current account deficits. But these fortuitous factors were soon dissipated by the liberalised FTR and unprecedented import of armaments as the Indian ruling elite acquired hegemonistic ambitions. The sharp rise in imports of intermediate and capital goods for the rapidly changing industrial sector added to the pressures. The main beneficiaries of the liberalised import regime have been exporters in EEC who significantly increased their access to Indian market for military hardware, industrial products, and technology.

What are the medium term prospects for overcoming the imbalances in the external sector? The Finance Minister prides himself on the improvement in the foreign reserves—built with additional borrowings from the IMF and IBRD with conditionalities. There has been a decline in the erosion of the NRI deposits. But the medium term outlook continues to be grim.

The key to the adjustment programme's success lies in the country's ability to sustain the growth in exports experienced in the 1985-90 period and to maintain the flows in the invisibles account and external assistance on soft terms. Since the higher cost of borrowings will eat away into the surpluses on the invisibles account and the net aid flows will be lower due to rising amortisation payments, the trade deficit can be sustained only with increased borrowings from NRI deposits and direct investment. It is unlikely that the country can sustain a trade deficit of more than \$ 4-5 bn. per year during the Eighth Plan period. This implies that India can ill afford to enter the arms bazaar once

again. Any large scale import of armaments will only worsen the imbalances in the balance of payments. As the experience of Iraq shows, any military machinery built equipped with imported armaments may be useful to cow down smaller neighbours, but is unlikely to address the threats in the one super power world. American ambitions of a total hegemony over Asia imply that sooner or later new contradictions will emerge with the middle level powers like China and India. Renewed arms imports on the scale witnessed in the eighties can further undermine the economic sovereignty of the country. The only sustainable strategy to meet this threat has to lie in an independent and modern industrial capability.

The petroleum sector too presents a bleak picture. During the last two years, output of crude oil has fallen by about 4 million tonnes. Given this decline and the absence of any new discovery, imports of oil are already rising and are likely to accelerate as industrial activity picks up. An additional import of 3 m. t. per year seems inevitable.

Export growth on the scale experienced in 1985-90 period is also unlikely to be sustained due the recession in the West and collapse of the East European market. Unless India can find new markets for its exports and emerging protectionist pressures in the West are not quickly dampened, the medium term outlook is bleak. The liberalisation of the trade regime and export incentives will not be able to avoid a much more severe debt trap. As the Latin American experience shows, the bulk of the growth in incomes can be siphoned off to repay the past liabilities. The nineties may similarly be a lost decade for India.

#### NOTES

1. Bhagwati J. and Desai, P. *India: Planning for Industrialisation*, OUP, London, 1970.
2. Ahluwalia, I.J. *Industrial Growth in India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1985.
3. Krueger, A., 'The Political Economy of the Rent Seeking Society', *American Economic Review*, June, 1974.
4. India, *Economic Survey 1987-88*, New Delhi, Feb. 1988.
5. India, *Economic Survey 1989-90*, Delhi, 1990.
6. UNCTAD data cited in *Financial Times*, Feb. 27, 1991.
7. RBI, *Annual Report 1988-89*, Bombay, July 1989, p. 95.
8. SIPRI, *World Armament and Disarmament*, 1989, Stockholm.
9. SIPRI, *World Armament and Disarmament 1985*, OUP, London, 1986.
10. RBI, *Annual Report 1990-91*, Bombay, 1991, p. 119.
11. *Frontline*, Aug. 17-Sept. 1, 1991
12. India, *Economic Survey 1991-92*, New Delhi, 1992.

KORKUT BORATAV\*

## *Distributional Dimensions and Macro-economic Policy Implications of External Liberalisation Under Structural Adjustment\*\**

This paper examines the relation between liberalisation and income distribution within the context of the structural adjustment operations implemented in semi-industrial economies and the consequent policy implications. The analysis is influenced by the Turkish experience with orthodox structural adjustment of the 1980s. Some of the conclusions may, however, be relevant for the debates on policy options in post-apartheid South Africa.

The paper is organized around three sections: The initial discussion is related to the impact of *overall liberalisation* on the so-called 'rent-seeking' activities. This is followed by an investigation of changes in the structure of relative prices corresponding to and following trade liberalisation and the distributional consequences thereof. The impact of internal and external financial liberalisation on internal income distribution and on surplus transfers to or from the external world (i.e. international income distribution) is the third sub-theme. Macro-economic policy implications and recommendations following from the analysis are covered under each theme.

### I

The orthodox expectation that overall liberalisation, external and internal, would improve income distribution in a developing economy is based on two pillars: (i) The so-called theory of rent-seeking and (ii) an awkward adaptation of the Stolper-Samuelson theorem to the actual conditions of labour-abundant developing economies with heavy state involvement. Some paradoxes with respect to the latter issue will be discussed in the following section. I will now briefly investigate how far the neoclassical utopia of a fully liberalised economic regime in which 'rents' of protection and of intervention have been eliminated altogether is likely to be realized under the actual conditions of semi-industrialized capitalist economies.

---

\* University of Istanbul

\*\* This paper was originally presented at the ANC Conference on Macroeconomic Strategy in Johannesburg, South Africa, in January 1992.

There are serious problems with the theory itself, particularly in its extreme versions, but I will leave them aside and concentrate the discussion on limits to liberalisation in those developing economies where the whole historical process of class formation and class rule has been structured on very close and specific linkages between the bourgeoisie and the state. Moreover, it is practically inconceivable that a once-and-for-all liberalisation on all fronts and total and immediate disinvolvement of the state from all its productive, regulative and investing functions can be carried out. Any way such a drastic operation is not recommended even by hardline liberals. These facts and necessities create a situation in which orthodox structural adjustment operations generate new 'rents' emanating from the state at the same time as it eliminates conventional rents in specific areas<sup>1</sup>. The Turkish case provides striking examples on this peculiar form of the emergence of new types of 'rents' simultaneously with the elimination of the traditional ones.

During the 1980s, the Turkish experience with structural adjustment was unique in the sense that economic policies were controlled by the same team with almost uninterrupted continuity. The team headed by the current president, Mr Ozal, was distinguished by a full ideological commitment to the orthodox recipes emanating from the World Bank<sup>2</sup>. Starting with the scrapping of all internal price controls early in 1980 and ending with almost a full transition to the liberalisation of capital movements and to convertibility for the Turkish lira in 1989, all the elements of orthodox structural adjustment model were implemented with a stubborn determination and with very few, and temporary, reversals. Turkey, therefore, provides an ideal case study to test the liberal expectations of the passage to an economy without 'rents'.

The areas which distinguished themselves as those where new types of 'rents' due to state activity replaced the traditional rents (i.e. those due to quotas, price controls and foreign exchange and credit allocations under conditions of overvalued exchange rate and negative interest rates) were as follows:

1. Subsidies for industrial exports of significant magnitude are the necessary components of a transition to a strategy of export orientation. Overinvoicing of exports and the notorious phenomenon of the so-called 'fictitious' exports were the inevitable outcome reaching as high as 15% of the export proceeds during the second half of the 1980s.

2. The traditional priority areas for private investments, mainly in import substituting manufacturing, lost their privileged position in fiscal, financial and trade policy incentives. This, however, did not signify the disappearance of all sectoral and functional selectivities. These were replaced by new priorities such as tourism, joint ventures with foreign capital, housing and exports. The authorization by public

agencies to permit interest rate and fiscal subsidies created huge gains for the approval of the relevant 'project' by public agencies.

3. As will be discussed later on, positive interest rates for deposits under conditions of high inflation result in exorbitantly high loan interest rates. Bankruptcies and salvaging operations for insolvent firms were the inevitable consequences. Government decisions on which firms ought to be saved were crucial and resulted in creating gains and losses of extremely high magnitudes.

4. The establishment and development of a capital market was also a high priority. Due to the reluctance of large family-based corporations to go public, Istanbul Stock Exchange (ISE) came to be dominated by public sector corporations. The public agency authorized to undertake transactions price movements. Prior access to the decisions of KOI on its stock market activities created huge capital gains for speculators in ISE. Evidence exists that the presidential family, *inter alia*, was intimately involved.

5. Closely related with the preceding phenomenon are privatization operations which were organized through ISE. Price decisions on shares to be offered to the public and price levels to be realized in the secondary market for the same shares were all based on government and KOI decisions. Once again, there is strong evidence on large scale capital gains based on insider trading. Advantageous treatment, corruption and profiteering abounded in other privatization operations in which public enterprises were sold to local or foreign capital through negotiations and special arrangements.

6. The drive towards 'less central governments' and decentralization resulted in transferring a number of policy areas such as urban planning and building licences on the basis of such 'plans' to the competence of local government. The magnitude of capital gains on real estate in large cities is totally dependent on such decisions and they exceed conventional 'rents' by high margins. Local politicians acting in close collaboration with privileged business groups and the ruling party were intimately involved in a number of scandals during the 1980s.

It could safely be proposed that the phenomena represented by these examples are not specific to Turkish conditions and similar processes have been observed in other countries following the path of orthodox liberalisation recipes.

It could, however, be objected that this overview of areas in which new types of 'rents' are created by the state and appropriated by private interests is irrelevant within the context of a liberalisation paradigm since in a fully liberal setting with minimal government, most of them would disappear. This is why orthodox economists and the Bretton Woods institutions may have considered these phenomena uninteresting and, therefore, consider them to be beyond the scope of essential policy issues.

I find this objection highly abstract and irrelevant. The question which should be posed is why such 'rent creating' activities keep on re-emerging despite the presence of a government, totally, dogmatically and ideologically committed to the type of liberalisation philosophy advocated by Washington circles. The answer lies with the historical, sociological and economical roots of state-bourgeoisie relations in capitalist development patterns in the 20th century. The bourgeoisie requires and demands direct and indirect support from the state. And the state, controlled in varying degrees by the same class, extends that support and thus contributes to the generation of 'rents'. When certain patterns of 'rent-creation' disappear or lose their importance, new patterns emerge. This is as far as one can go in generalizing about the phenomenon. National specificities and concrete economic conditions in given historical moments determine the exact evolution of the related patterns.

There is, however, another peculiarity related with the liberalisation experiences and their 'rent creation' implications in a number of developing countries including Turkey: an anti-bureaucratic discourse usually accompanies liberalisation experiences which ends up by scrapping most of bureaucracy's power on economic decision making and implementation. Since the state's 'rent creating' capacities, as discussed above, do not grow any smaller, this merely signifies the same powers shifting from the bureaucracy to the political layer of the state apparatus and the expansion of objective conditions for clientelism and patronage in government/business relations.

The specific pattern in which these clientelist linkages evolved in post-1980 Turkey led to a situation in which most logic disappeared from surplus redistribution and uncertainty and confusion started to reign within the business community. This was a factor contributing to the undermining of 'animal spirits' of Turkish investors during the 1980s. The existence of a strong, well-paid, well-trained and relatively autonomous bureaucracy does not, by itself, signify lower levels of 'rent creation'. What it signifies is a situation in which conditions of impartiality (or, more equal conditions) among rivaling claims with respect to the *distribution* of 'rents' are realized. This is, definitely, a more stable situation for the business community as a whole compared with the highly arbitrary pattern based on clientelism which accompanies the 'anti-bureaucratic' operations carried out the basis of orthodox recipes.

What kind of policy guidelines emerge from the foregoing investigation? Any kind of policy orientation has to liberate itself from orthodox dogmas and expectations. The claim that external and internal liberalisation will ultimately eliminate all kinds of 'rents' and thereby improve income distribution is based upon a naive perception of the historical processes of class formation and class rule in most developing countries. Ideologically, this view serves the

objective of justifying the deterioration in the relative economic position of labouring classes during orthodox structural adjustment.

At a more practical level, since, 'rents' in one form or another seem to be inevitable under contemporary conditions for semi-industrialized economies, ways and means should be found to minimise their adverse impact. In those developing countries with a strong bureaucratic tradition, the preservation of a committed, well-paid, efficient, relatively incorruptible bureaucracy creates stable conditions in the distribution of 'rents' and contributes to the emergence of a favourable environment for private capital accumulation. In post-apartheid South Africa the *formation* of such a bureaucracy may emerge as a crucial task. Other African experiences may be valuable, most probably in a negative sense.

## II

The impact of 'opening-up' and of trade liberalisation on relative sectoral prices and thereby on income distribution is considered with extreme optimism by orthodox economics. A typical labour-surplus developing economy in which agriculture is the most labour intensive sector suffers from protection and import substituting industrialization by distorting prices against agriculture and in favour of industry. Over-valued exchange rates under import substitution distort sectoral prices further against tradeables. These distortions are expected to be corrected *via* export promotion, trade liberalisation and a market-based determination of exchange rates following a major devaluation. Under a liberal trade regime, agriculture/industry and tradeable/non-tradeable price ratios are, therefore, expected to rise. Reasoning on Heckscher-Ohlin lines and on the basis of the doctrine of static comparative advantage, it is expected that improved income distribution and higher levels of welfare and output will result from trade liberalisation.

Recent studies on comparative price structures and time series thereof demonstrate the extreme naivete of these predictions<sup>3</sup> I shall limit myself to discussing the Turkish findings for the 1980s when (i) the exchange rate depreciated significantly in real terms up till 1988; (ii) the trade volume increased substantially both in absolute and relative terms and there was a significant movement towards export orientation, and (iii) quantitative restrictions on imports were lifted and nominal and effective rates of protection declined. In short, all the elements of a liberalised trade regime were established in the 1980s.

Relative price movements show a totally conflicting pattern with neoclassical expectations: Agriculture's terms of trade *vis-à-vis* industry declined by 52 per cent between the 1977 peak and 1989. The 'non-productive' sectors, on the other hand, exhibit a relative price decline of 8 per cent *vis-à-vis* the 'productive' sectors during the same

period. The interpretation of this finding is significant when non-productive/productive sectors<sup>4</sup> are used as proxies for non-tradeable and tradeable sectors respectively.

How can we explain these apparent paradoxes? I think that no progress on grasping this problem is possible unless it is perceived that relative sectoral price movements are primarily problems of income distribution and an exogenous, separate analysis of distributional dynamics becomes necessary. The trade regime, *per se*, provides an unsatisfactory, even misleading explanation of sectoral relative price movements because it lacks this additional analysis.

In the Turkish case one can propose three lines of reasoning to explain the apparent paradox. First of all, one should emphasize the direct dependence of agriculture's terms of trade on the magnitude and structure of government support policies extended to farmers. This can only be analysed within the context of the relations between the state and peasantry in the Turkish case. Under a parliamentary regime in a developing country like Turkey with a sizeable peasant population, populism *vis-à-vis* farmers becomes an integral element of the political system and agricultural support policies emerge as the essential component of populism. Other patterns of class linkages between agrarian oligarchies, landlords and the 'farmers' lobby' are crucial in understanding movements in agriculture's terms of trade in Latin America, Asia, Europe and USA. The existence of a military regime in Turkey during the early 1980s and a very restricted movement towards democracy up till the late 1980s resulted in an erosion of support prices in real and relative terms and contributed to the deterioration of agriculture's terms of trade.

A second explanatory factor may be sought within the framework of non-identical pricing behaviours of agriculture and industry and the consequent differential impact of macro-policies on the two sectors. In a setting in which mark-up and flexible pricing behaviours prevail in industry and agriculture respectively and when domestic absorption is under pressure, if the joint impact of (i) real exchange rate depreciation, (ii) real price increases of local basic inputs from public enterprises and (iii) high positive interest rates for bank financing of firms' working capital exceed the opposite impact of real wage declines, the whole burden of adjustment in relative prices shifts onto agriculture. It should be evident that these changes correspond to orthodox adjustment. An additional explanatory factor emerges if industrial mark-ups are related conversely with real wage movements.

A third line of reasoning is related to the non-productive/productive (or non-tradeable/tradeable) relative price movements. When sub-sectors are redefined on the basis of their 'productive' or 'pure service' attributes (see note 4), it will be observed that the relative prices of all non-productive sub-sectors are, in fact, directly dependent on the distributional variable each of which have been affected in



differential fashion by policies or by the actions of social groups involved during the relevant period. To be more specific, the 'relative price movements' of the four sub-sectors of the non-productive group, i.e. *finance, housing, trade, and self-employed liberal professions* are directly dependent on *interest rates, residential rents, commercial margins and fees* charged by professional services respectively. Distributional dynamics, affected by the trade regime only indirectly and marginally, are the determinants behind the changes in these variables and it is there that one should seek the explanation behind the paradox of the relative price decline of tradeables.

I think that some of the foregoing observations and generalizations based on the Turkish experience and data for the past decade may be relevant for other developing countries passing through similar experiences. One can conclude that the approach linking sectoral relative prices to the degree of and changes in trade liberalisation is an exaggerated one and should be treated with caution. It follows that any positive changes in overall income distribution, resource allocation and growth which is expected to emanate from such changes, rests on dubious ground. A word of caution may also be reserved for those who are not prisoners of the comparative advantage paradigm and may consider the deterioration of the price scissors for agriculture as an improvement for potential industrial accumulation. Particularly in those countries with high inflation rates such changes are usually accompanied by exorbitant levels of high loan interest rates and significant portions of gross industrial profits are transferred to financial capital and to rentiers. Industry, thus, becomes unable to preserve the fruits of improved terms of trade. I will come back to this point later on.

What kind of policy guidelines follows from the foregoing analysis? First of all, the illusion that the relative prices emanating from market forces in a liberal trade regime will create favorable growth conditions for those sectors with high growth potential in a comparative advantage setting must be eliminated once and for all. Any efficiency improvement which follows from trade liberalisation is due to export orientation rather than import liberalisation *per se*. And even the former impact is due to scale economies, the technological and managerial impact of larger export markets rather than the expected corrections in sectoral relative prices and higher levels of efficiency therefrom<sup>5</sup>. If sectoral priorities will stay with economic policy makers, it follows that selective policies will also have an important part to play.

If improved export performance of non-traditional, mainly industrial sectors emerges as a policy necessity, a distinction should be made between short-term and long-term performance. There are three strategical tools suitable for such an orientation: wage suppression, exchange rate depreciation and improvement of industrial

productivity. The first two tools, usually integral parts of orthodox policy packages, are short-term solutions to a strategical problem. Any improvement in competitiveness based on them can easily disappear in the course of a single year. A case in point is, once again, the Turkish case: Turkey significantly increased her competitiveness on industrial exports on the basis of currency depreciation and real wage erosion between 1977 and 1988 despite stagnant labour productivity in manufacturing. However, this improvement was altogether wiped out in a single year when increased trade union militancy resulting in significant industrial real wage increases coincided with exchange rate appreciation due to hot money inflows. It is evident that an improvement in competitiveness based on better productivity performance cannot be reversed so easily.

The strategical key to productivity improvements is higher levels and effectiveness of investments. Competitiveness improvements based on productivity are long-lasting and provide a number of additional possibilities for policy makers. A semi-industrialized country following a development pattern with high wages and high productivity increases can tax its working class at a higher rate than can be done in a low-wage/low productivity case and can thus contribute to the alleviation of the so-called fiscal constraint on the economy. Increased public revenues would allow for higher subsidies to exporters partly compensating for narrower profit margins. Higher rates of public investment would directly and (in case of complementarity with private investment) indirectly contribute to further improvements in productivity. In short, the strategical target of a long-lasting export performance can be realized essentially on the basis of an active policy of industrial accumulation and technological progress. A passive approach of expecting efficiency improvements which follow sectoral resource transfers due to relative price impact of trade liberalisation can be no substitute.

### III

Financial liberalisation in its broadest sense, external and internal, is closely related, if not identical, to the liberalisation of capital movements to and from the national economy. This aspect of the orthodox structural adjustment package, in my view, has the most serious and adverse implications for the medium-run growth prospects of a semi-industrialized economy.

The case for internal financial liberalisation based on the so-called financial repression thesis is well known. Its disastrous consequences in Latin America leading to financial crashes have also been investigated thoroughly. On this aspect, I shall limit myself to dwelling on two themes: The newly emerging wage/interest trade-offs which are closely related to the distributional conflict between

industrial *vs.* financial capital and rentiers and the fiscal crisis due to government borrowings with high interest rates under inflationary conditions.

A policy of positive real interest rates for rentiers (deposits) under high inflation creates unsustainable interest rates for firms (industrial and entrepreneurial capital). The Turkish data produces a stable coefficient of 1.4 between deposit and loan interest rates for the late 1980s. A 10% real interest rate for deposits when inflation is running at 60% results in a real loan interest rate of nearly 40%. Such high real rates of return in productive assets are inconceivable under normal conditions and firms are therefore forced to use bank credits mostly for financing working capital. Inflationary consequences and adverse impacts on productive investments follow.

This creates an economic regime which can rightly be called 'the kingdom of the rentier and of finance'. Interest income from time deposits, foreign exchange deposits and government bonds in Turkey reached 14.1% of GDP and interest payments absorbed 56.3 % of gross profits of the largest industrial firms in 1988<sup>6</sup>. Financial capital and rentiers emerged as major 'partners' of industrial capital under these circumstances. Ultimately, this situation leads to the emergence of the trade-off between interest costs and wages: Surplus profits for industry accruing from wage suppression are channelled to banks and to rentiers in the form of rising interest payments. Internal conflicts within the ranks of the bourgeoisie on the redistribution of the surplus are concentrated on the issue of financial policies.

A 'liberal' financial regime contributes to the emergence and perpetuation of the fiscal crisis of the state. Governments tend to give in to the demands of the corporate sector to deduct interest payments from the base of the corporate tax. On the other hand, in many countries including Turkey interest income is not treated as a regular taxable component of the personal income tax. (A 'withholding tax' of 10% from deposit interests is the only tax on interest in Turkey.) Both attitudes contribute to the erosion of the tax base of the state. On the other hand, deficit financing through borrowing results in a situation in which interest on government bonds becomes a major component (around 25% in Turkey) of public expenditure. Since this expenditure component is considered an 'untouchable' one, any operation on reducing PSBR along IMF lines creates pressures on public investments and on current expenditure with inevitable real reductions in education and health services. A comparison of two groups of countries starting from roughly the same PSBR/GDP ratios, but with different interest rate policies show that in the course of a decade countries with a higher interest rate profile have been forced to pressurize their public expenditure on investments, education and health much more than countries with lower interest rates<sup>7</sup>.

In financial policy discussions there is a thesis that in analysing the allocational and distributional impact of interest rates, only the non-inflationary component of interest income (or costs) should be considered. It is difficult to agree with the viewpoint. Disregarding the *wealth* impact of alternative financial policies under inflationary conditions, nominal interest payments and revenues constitute rival claims on available resources and have impacts on alternative income flows. The foregoing discussion on the trade-offs between interest payments vs. gross profits, interest income vs. wages, interest payments vs. other items of government expenditure substantiates the weakness of this approach.

When liberalisation of capital movements is superimposed on internal financial liberalisation, money and capital markets of the developing country are interlinked with and become subservient to the international financial system. The consequences cannot be analysed without making a distinction between different segments of the bourgeoisie. Rentiers lose most of their remaining links with their country of origin and capital flight or hot money increases substantially in size. For firms, i.e. entrepreneurial/industrial bourgeoisie, external finance (borrowing abroad) becomes a substitute for local finance (borrowing at home). The scope of bank intermediation between rentiers and firms, both local and external, increases significantly and, moreover, their operations as institutional rentiers expand in relative terms. Public agencies, state enterprises, local and even central government may start behaving like firms; and in due time borrowing abroad may become a substitute for taxation and borrowing at home.

The outcome is usually an uncontrolled growth of the external debt. This is due to the joint impact of rentiers', banks' and firms' behaviour. When  $e$  is the expected rate of nominal appreciation of the foreign currency (e.g. the dollar),  $i_d$  and  $i_f$  are local and external rates of interest and disregarding the risk factor,  $i_d - (i_f + e + i_f/e) = 0$  becomes the neutrality condition for hot money inflows or outflows. If we label the left hand side of the equation as  $A$ ,  $A > 0$  corresponds to conditions for short-term capital inflows. Rentiers prefer to invest in local currency and firms tend to borrow abroad at lower cost. When  $A < 0$  hot money outflows dominate the capital accounts of balance of payments. Firms prefer borrowing at home and rentiers move funds abroad—an operation which, in developing country conditions, is usually referred to as capital flight.

In semi-industrialized countries which move towards external financial liberalisation under high inflation, this formulation does not operate symmetrically and creates a number of complications.

A striking lack of symmetry which is peculiar to developing countries is related to capital flight. Capital outflow from a developed country signifies lending abroad resulting in a decline in the net external debt of the relevant country. On the other hand, there is

now a growing consensus that capital flight from a developing country ultimately results in an increase in the external debt. We thus arrive at the paradoxical situation that under a regime of liberalised capital movements, both hot money inflows and capital flight result in external debt growth.

Another complication with the operation of the foregoing formulation under inflationary conditions is due to the large margin between deposit and loan interest rates at home. Conditions for capital outflow for *rentiers* (sensitive to *deposit* interest rates) may coexist with conditions for *external borrowing for firms* (sensitive to *loan* interest rates). It is difficult to estimate the new outcome of such opposite forces. One cannot assume that  $i_d$  represents a *single* rate of interest under such circumstances.

It should also be recalled that  $e$  in the formulation above is an *expected* magnitude which is highly sensitive to a number of political and economic variables. A case in point is related to the dichotomy between the impact of actual exchange rate movements on the current account and capital account. If the exchange rate is floated under conditions of high interest rates, hot money inflows may inflate reserves leading to exchange rate appreciation. This process may continue for some time. However, at a particular moment trade deficits due to overvaluation may be perceived as unsustainable by rentiers, which signifies a sudden increase in the *expected* rate of devaluation (i.e. a higher  $e$ ). A run on the dollar and capital flight may make these predictions come true creating the preconditions for a balance of payments and external debt crisis.

Under a recently liberalised external financial system policy makers live under a 'capital flight syndrome' and they are intrinsically committed to high interest rates and a low rate of expected devaluation. Let us also recall that interest rates and the exchange rate are also crucial variables with a serious impact on the real side of the economy, e.g. on investments, exports and imports. Even in the simplest case of comparative statics, if policy makers limit themselves to two policy variables, i.e. using only an active interest rate and exchange rate policy, but attempt to control (i) short-term capital movements due to rentiers' behaviour; (ii) short-term capital movements due to firms' behaviour; (iii) current account movements due to the elasticity of exports and imports in response to exchange rate changes; (iv) a sustainable level of investments sensitive to loan interest rates; they are confronted with an impossible task. Non-market interventions and controls will have to complement exchange and interest rate policies. If there is full commitment to external financial liberalisation, import controls, export subsidies, tax incentives or subsidies to investors etc. are among the typical policy measures. Full liberalisation which leaves the determination of  $i$  and  $e$  to mainly market forces and expectations is most likely to create

financial chaos with a high probability of a debt crisis with almost no chance of attaining desired levels of investment and of trade balance.

An uncontrolled, but unsustainable growth of the external debt will, in due time, result in net transfers abroad with serious welfare and distributional implications at an international level. This is a prospect which is even more serious for post-apartheid South Africa than other developing countries since there will be a natural tendency for the white population to transfer wealth abroad and for an immediate increase in lending to the country following the lifting of sanctions. Strict control on the capital account of the balance of payments emerges, in my view, as a strategical objective. A number of policy orientations may be proposed:

1. An active policy on interest rates emerges as a necessity. A common-sense approach may be to target a real loan interest rate not exceeding 10% and to adjust deposit interest rates accordingly. Assuming a proportionate margin of 1.4 between the two rates, this results in negative real interest rates for deposits when inflation exceeds 25%. There is no cause for concern in such a situation: Rentiers may shift to the stock exchange or real estate, in both cases with more favorable impact on productive investments than in a regime of high positive interest rates for 'savers'.

2. An exchange rate policy targeting components (or the balance) of the current account is preferable to one oriented towards controlling short-term capital movements. This signifies a purchasing power parity-based exchange rate determination instead of a market-based floating rate. No a priori case for real appreciations or depreciations can be designed. A dual rate à la Kaldor could also be envisaged.

3. Liberalisation of capital movements is incompatible with an active exchange and interest rate policy oriented towards the current account and the investment level. For South Africa, a commitment to preserve the existing foreign exchange and capital account controls which are in force is recommended. It should be kept in mind that movements towards liberalisation in these areas are usually irreversible. The reasoning that capital flight exists even under a controlled regime cannot, *per se*, be accepted as a justification for deregulation since the magnitudes involved make a great deal of difference. It should, however, be noted that it is more difficult to control rentiers' hot money inflows and outflows than firms' (and public agencies') external borrowing and banking operations.

4. Depending on the burden of the interest payments on the internal public debt, a consolidation operation on the existing bonds may be necessary. This is a complicated and delicate process which can only be carried out swiftly, but on the basis of careful and intricate prior preparation. There is nowadays an opinion with a broadening group of partisans in Turkey that if deficit financing is inevitable, printing money may be a lesser evil than internal borrowing at high interest

rates. Considering the fiscal burden of the internal debt, this view should not be rejected out of hand.

5. Interest income in nominal terms should be taxable as part of total personal income. A corollary seems to be treating interest costs as deductible in corporate taxation. On the other hand, taxation of capital gains, both for real estate and for securities, can be based on real terms.

6. As discussed above, trade-offs between labour incomes and speculative revenues including interest income are likely to emerge in most liberalisation experiences. A corollary of this outcome may be that macro-policies which succeed in suppressing the parasitic elements of the bourgeoisie, i.e. rentiers and finance, would allow for real and relative progression of labour incomes together with increased levels of industrial investments. If such a path becomes feasible, it may create conditions for the negotiation of some sort of a social pact between the working class, the peasantry and industrial/agrarian capital on the basis of a pro-industrial and anti-rentier policy. This is, however, an extremely complicated issue which falls beyond the scope of the present paper.

#### NOTES

1. In this context I would prefer to use the expression of 'positions of advantage' emanating from the presence and activities of the state' instead of 'rents'. However, in this paper the latter term (in inverted commas) may be interpreted as a short-hand expression for the former.
2. The same cannot be said with respect to orthodox *stabilisation* recipes emanating from IMF. Turkish policy makers kept on violating stabilisation criteria while sustaining a determined movement towards liberalisation on orthodox, i.e. World Bank, lines.
3. The monumental work of Kravis and his associates produces numerous paradoxes on comparative price analysis which shows the contradictions of neoclassical analysis on this paradigm. See also, J. Ghosh, 'Exchange Rate, Trade Balance: Some Aspects of Recent Indian Experience', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3. March 1990, Vol XXV/9 and D.S.P. Rao et. al., 'A comparative Study of National Price Levels, Agricultural Prices and Exchange Rates', *World Development*, 1990, Vol. 18/2 for Indian and international price movements contradicting the orthodox scheme.
4. In grouping different industries between productive/non-productive sectors, the 'government' sector was excluded altogether since this sector's contribution to GDP is estimated *solely* by salaries of civil servants and hence its 'relative price' (which declined by 56% vis a vis GDP between 1977 and 1989) acquires a peculiar meaning. The 'productive' group consisted of construction, transport and communication in addition to agriculture, mining and industry. The 'non-productive' group, therefore, consisted of the service sector *minus* government, construction, transport and communication. See K. Boratav, 'The Medium-term Prospects for the Turkish Economy', *Problems of Developing Countries in the 1990s*, Volume II, (Edited by F.D. McCarthy), Washington D.C., The World Bank, 1990.

5. See L. Taylor, *Economic Openness-Problems to the Century's End*, Helsinki, Wider, 1988 and D. Rodrik, 'Closing the Technology Gap: Does Trade Liberalisation Really Help?' (mimeo), Helsinki, Wider, 1988 as sceptical views on the positive impact of trade (particularly import) liberalisation on economic growth in developing economies.
6. Boratav, op. cit., Table 1.
7. For a comparison of Turkey with Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt on these lines see K. Boratav, *Public Sector, Intervention and Economic Development: The Impact of Changing Perspectives and Policies during the 1980s* (mimeo) prepared for UNCTAD, February 1991.



PARBHAT PATNAIK\*

## *Macro-economic Policy and Planning Economic Transformation\*\**

### I

The reference to 'planning' in the title of this paper may appear to many as a mere ideological hang-over. But the case for 'planning', in the sense of a co-ordinated set of policies to realise, at least in some key sectors, certain magnitudes of investment and output-growth, remains as strong today for developing countries wishing to achieve economic and social transformation, as it ever was.

There are at least three reasons for this. First, the pace of investment in a spontaneously-operating capitalist economy depends upon the so-called 'state of business confidence'. The state of business confidence may be such that it leaves the economy demand-constrained for long-stretches of time; what is more, even when the macroeconomy is not demand-constrained, the mix between consumption and investment in aggregate demand may be too much in favour of consumption relative to social requirements. Deliberate intervention by the State is needed not only to overcome demand-constraints, as the Keynesians argue, but, more importantly, to alter the composition of aggregate demand, and to do so in a manner which is socially equitable.

The second reason relates to the need for sectoral balance. While the previous argument remains valid even in a one-good world, an additional problem arises the moment we recognise the real life multiplicity of commodities. For a spontaneously-operating capitalist economy, the pattern of supplies adjusts to the pattern of demand through episodes of profit-inflation located in particular sectors. These provide the signals for supply-adjustments to occur over a period of time. In short, the episodes of sectoral profit-inflation are more or less protracted, less protracted, depending upon the speed of adjustment of supplies. But such episodes of profit inflation, if they are severe, protracted and relate to certain essential sectors, are capable of causing extreme social hardships and devastation. The most notable case here relates of

---

\*Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi.

\*\*This paper was originally presented at the ANC Conference on Macro-economic Strategy in Johannesburg, South Africa, in January 1992.

course to the supply of wage-goods. A sharp profit inflation in the wage-goods sector can cause, and is known to have caused, severe famines. Deliberate State investment is needed to eliminate supply-adjustment lags in wage-goods and in other key sectors. In sectors like agriculture, it is essential in any case to activate private investment, i.e. for the process of supply adjustment itself. In addition, by anticipating profit inflation and activating supplies before the event, it can in fact eliminate the very need for profit-inflation, and hence the attendant economic hardships.

The third reason turns on the distinction between spontaneous and non-spontaneous structural change. Even if a system is not demand-constrained, and even if sectoral imbalances are instantaneously eliminated through the perfect shiftability of capital from one sector to another, the accumulation process is accompanied by a process of spontaneous structural change. The introduction of new processes and products which are perceived to be marketable gives rise to spontaneous structural change. The market in other words responds not only to visible signals, but also to a certain range of invisible signals. What it does not respond to is a range of other kinds of invisible signals, e.g. the social discontent inherent in a situation of unemployment, poverty and sub-human existence. The latter require the deliberate introduction of non-spontaneous structural changes, and this can only be done through deliberate State intervention.

It may be thought that the elimination of poverty is a matter merely of raising the rate of accumulation further, leaving the market to decide where this accumulation goes, so that this case is merely a part of our first reason. This however is not necessarily correct. Raising the rate of accumulation, if it simply accelerates spontaneous structural change and thereby raises the rate of growth of labour-productivity, may have a negligible additional impact by way of absorbing the poor and the dispossessed into higher-paid wage-employment. And if the population is expanding rapidly, then this absorption may require rates of accumulation which are impracticably high if a reasonably meaningful time-horizon is chosen. The need arises therefore for introducing non-spontaneous structural change, and curbing to an extent spontaneous structural change. Both this introduction as well as this curbing require State intervention.

Taken together, these three reasons for State intervention constitute an argument for more than mere fiscal interventionism, for more than mere public investment policy. They amount to a case for the state shaping broadly the trajectory of growth itself. While this is what I mean by planning it is obviously not synonymous with central planning, with detailed output targets, that was current in the Soviet Union earlier. There would be a range of public investment targets that the State would try to meet. It would seek to realise complementary private investment targets, and hence certain minimal levels of output

growth-targets in some key sectors. These would determine the overall trajectory of development, within which there would be sufficient room for the operation of the free market, with the State imaginatively improvising responses to the strains that would inevitably arise from time to time owing to the operation of such a mix between the plan and the market.

As is obvious from the above, the operation of such a system is not only not predicated upon universal public or collective ownership of the means of production, but is even compatible with private capitalist (not to mention petty) ownership in several spheres, provided of course the capitalists are responsive to the social need underlying the trajectory of development articulated by the state.

## II

I should like to distinguish this vision, which I think has relevance for a democratic South African economy in the current conjuncture, from two other possible visions. The first of these believes in a 'minimalist' State. While the need for State intervention for undertaking certain infrastructural investments which the capitalists may be unwilling to do, for providing certain social services, and for weaving a 'safely-net' for the poor and the unemployed (the need for which is often seen to be only transitional), is recognised, the basic solution to social and economic problems is seen to lie in rapid economic growth, and the chief means of growth are seen to lie in the provision of freedom of operation to capital, both domestic as well as multinational, in the domestic economy. Allowing markets to function without interference, removing domestic controls of various kinds, and liberalising trade, are visualised as ushering in an internationally competitive, efficient economy which would exhibit rapid and sustained growth. While a certain amount of taxation by the state is accepted as being necessary for meeting its spending obligations, such taxation, it is suggested, should neither result in domestic price-distortions nor destroy capitalists' incentives by being excessively high (at any rate by international standards).

A variant of this argument in the South African context would state that since tax-rates here are already very high by international standards, the State should meet its expenditure obligations, especially for the uplift of the oppressed in a democratic South Africa, by privatising State owned assets. This particular argument is palpably wrong. In a supply-constrained system, an increase in State expenditure on the upliftment of the blacks would not cause any additional macro-imbalances only if there is a simultaneous reduction in aggregate demand elsewhere i.e. in other avenues of public expenditure or in private consumption or investment (apart from foreign capital inflow). Now, unless the sale of State-owned assets to the

private sector results in a reduction of private consumption or investment in order to finance their purchase, privatisation financed State expenditure would cause serious macro-imbalances by generating excess aggregate demand. Putting it differently, if private purchases of State-owned assets are financed by credit-creation, then using the proceeds from privatisation to expand State expenditure is no different in its macro-impact from a straight-forward credit-financed expansion of State expenditure; while causing exactly the same macro-imbalance as the latter, it amounts to a gratuitous transfer of State-owned assets to private hands.

The fallacy of this argument incidentally is a replication of a fallacy which one finds in IMF-stabilisation policy packages. For stabilisation, the Fund argues, fiscal deficits should be cut; suggesting targets for fiscal deficits is a part of the Fund's usual 'conditionalities'. But in calculating the fiscal deficit, the Fund takes the proceeds from the sale of State-owned assets as an item of receipt, which in general is analytically illegitimate. The Fund may have ideological reasons for treating the sale proceeds of State-owned assets as if they constituted flow-receipts, but to accept this argument amounts to subscribing to a fallacy.

Let us however get back to the vision of a 'minimalist State'. In a 'liberal trade' regime, assuming a given exchange rate, assuming a given import propensity, assuming that there is no deficiency of aggregate demand arising on the domestic side, i.e. that the State and the private sector taken together spend what they get, and ignoring all capital flows and debt-servicing, the rate of growth of output would be tethered to the rate of growth of exports. Those who argue for a 'minimalist State', therefore, pin their hopes for rapid growth on the ability of a 'liberal' regime, because of its acquired international competitiveness, to achieve high export growth-rates as well as a progressive lowering of the import propensity. The argument in other words is that such an economy would hold on to, or even improve upon, its share of the world market in a period when this market itself is believed, on the whole, to be a rapidly expanding one, and to witness no further increases in restrictive trade practices.

Even if we concede for a moment the last two beliefs, the argument is an invalid one for the following reasons. First of all a 'liberal trade' regime is a weapon that cuts both ways. While it is a truism that, if the world market is expanding rapidly, a country that retains or improves its share of it would witness rapid growth, a 'liberal trade' regime is as likely to allow others to encroach upon the country's own home market as it is to allow the country to encroach upon the markets of others. In a typical third world context in fact, it is the encroachment by others upon the country's own home market which is the fall-out of 'trade liberalisation'. What is more, whatever prospects might have existed for the country's eventually encroaching

upon others' markets get sabotaged in the very process of transition to a 'liberal' regime; in other words, the very nature of the traverse from a dirigiste to a 'liberal' regime determines the eventual position the country finds itself in, no matter what potential a 'liberal' regime held for it in the abstract. Trade liberalisation brings immediately in its train a process of domestic de-industrialisation (together often with a lowering of the domestic savings-ratio), which is financed by borrowings from the Fund, the Bank, and, through their courtesy, from multinational banks. The beneficial effects which are supposed to accrue to the export profile from trade liberalisation, can after all manifest themselves, if at all, only after a considerable length of time. Meanwhile, the debt incurred at the initial stage of the traverse has to be serviced, and for this a further deflation of the economy is undertaken. The unemployment initially engendered by de-industrialisation is added to by the subsequent deflation. The running down of infrastructure because of the deflation subverts to an extent the prospects of export growth. And even if perchance exports do eventually pick up, the additional exchange earnings go largely into debt-service payments, somewhat easing perhaps the magnitude of domestic deflation, but by no means lifting the economy to the promised higher growth-profile. This picture of the traverse is made only grimmer to the extent that the exchange rate is depreciated as an accompaniment to the deflationary policy. This accentuates inflation, lowers the real wages especially of the unorganised workers and gives rise to speculative capital flight. In other words, the deflation-cum-devaluation package succeeds in ensuring that the burden of domestic adjustment during the traverse falls precisely on those sections of the population which are least able to bear it.

But this is not all. The argument for a 'liberal' economic regime is flawed for a second, even more important, reason. If it entails freedom for capital flows, then it makes the growth-process of the domestic economy dependent entirely upon the caprices of domestic and international investors. In any case, a theoretical flaw in any conception of a free global economy, where each country accepts the world prices of commodities and adjusts its production structure to these prices, lies in the fact that, even assuming that there are no problems of global aggregate demand, the locations where capital accumulates remain indeterminate; the fact that underdeveloped countries have lower wages does not by any means ensure that capital would flow towards them, rather than away from them as has historically happened. But when we superimpose freedom of capital flows upon a situation of traverse as discussed above, the problem becomes acute. Domestic deflation, growing unemployment, accelerating inflation accompanied by repeated depreciations of the exchange rate, declining real wages of unorganised workers, and the growing discontent that all this gives rise to, together with the increasing criminalisation of the

society, provide the setting for capital flight; and this only exacerbates the problem ensuring that the promised turnaround in the economy is postponed still further.

It is hardly surprising that almost all the success stories of export-led growth, whether it is late-19th century Germany, or 20th century Japan, or South Korea more recently, are stories which are based on import controls. The form of import control may have differed across the countries, or within a particular country in different periods; it may have been import-rationing in one period, tariffs in another, and non-tariff barriers against imports in yet another period. But the essence of the success lies in a not-altogether edifying neo-mercantilist strategy of attempting to capture as much of the world market as possible, while preventing the encroachment by others upon the domestic market. And this has been accompanied in crucial periods by controls over the freedom of capital outflows. Even China which experimented for a while with the more orthodox prescriptions of 'economic liberalisation', put down its shutters on liberal imports fairly quickly, and yet is currently witnessing an export boom of sorts. One can in fact go even further: the only real instances in history of sustained and authentic adoptions (not voluntarily of course) of liberal economic regimes in the orthodox sense are the informal and the formal colonies, like India, prior to the Great Depression. And these hardly lend any credibility to the argument for 'economic liberalisation'.

The 'liberal economy' vision in the case of a democratic South Africa is, I venture to say, fraught with a particular danger. The advent of majority rule will almost certainly be accompanied by some flight of capital; in fact capital flight is reported to have started already. Under these conditions, pressure on the newly-elected democratic government to adopt a 'liberal economy' and to accept an IMF umbrella as a means of reassuring multinational finance capital is bound to be strong. The price to be paid for this will almost certainly be a holding back, to put it very mildly, on expenditures designed for uplifting the hitherto deprived population. And this in turn is likely to create alienation and disaffection among them, giving rise to fears of political instability. Nothing promotes capital flight more than fears of political instability; as a result, the adoption of a 'liberal economy' by the democratic government of South Africa would run the risk of neither preventing capital flight, nor meeting, however partially, the expectations aroused by democracy among the hitherto dominated people. Resisting pressures for a 'liberal economy', outlining clearly a trajectory of planned growth which would bring improved conditions for the majority within a fairly short time-horizon, and enlisting the support of capital for such a programme against the promise of a 'fair deal' is likely to be a potentially more successful strategy.

The 'liberal economy' with a minimalist State however is only one possible vision of the economic regime, somewhat extreme but currently

quite fashionable. And alternative vision within which one can group together a number of diverse positions, would accept the need for a significantly interventionist State, but would denounce any conception of planning i.e. of the State attempting to bring about a particular trajectory of economic growth itself. One position within this overall conception of the State as a 'macro-manager' is advanced by a number of economists working in the mainstream tradition. Their argument is that while the State needs to intervene, it must do nothing to distort relative prices in the domestic economy away from the relative price configuration prevailing in the world market. State intervention in other words must be predicated upon 'getting prices right' in this particular sense.

The problem with this argument lies first of all in determining what the appropriate world price for a commodity is. Quite apart from the question of non-comparability in many instances between home-produced and foreign-produced commodities, there are problems arising from the fact of 'dumping' in the international market, as well as from non-linearities associated with inelastic demand for domestic exportables, especially primary commodities. Moreover, even if we abstracted from these considerations, this particular prescription it seems to me can be fulfilled only in a regime of planning. Having a fix-price system puts the onus of adjustment on the quantities produced and supplied; and if these have to adjust without causing significant short-term divergence of relative prices from the desired configuration, then the role of ex-ante coordination of investment decisions becomes more rather than less pronounced.

Paradoxically therefore this prescription, if it can be put to practice at all, increases rather than diminishes the need for planning. The problem of putting it to practice, apart from what has been mentioned above, arises from an additional source: if the relative prices of commodities are to conform to the international configuration, what should be the relative price of labour vis a vis commodities? In the Indian economy for instance, the relative price between agriculture and industry has a greater spread than the corresponding relative price in the world market. If this spread is to be narrowed, should this happen through a squeeze on industrial wages, or should this happen through a squeeze on industrial profits? Should the State, in getting prices right, also embark on an 'incomes policy'? And if so, then are we not talking about the need for even more comprehensive State intervention, even more comprehensive planning?

In any case, whether we take this particular, or any other, argument in favour of the view that the State should act as a mere 'macro-manager', all of them miss the third, and to my mind the most important, reason for planning in a third world economy, namely, the need to curb spontaneous structural change in the economy and to introduce unspontaneous structural change to meet certain social

objectives. Suppose for instance in an economy which has got its prices 'right' in the above sense, there is a pervasive tendency to introduce labour-displacing technological progress, be it greater mechanisation in agriculture which is not simultaneously yield-raising, or a shift of cropping-pattern in favour of low-employment generating crops. Should there be some control over the pace of this change, or should we simply accept Ricardo's argument on machinery and hope for the best in the long-run, when the nature of the long-run denouement itself is by no means certain? The very handling of such questions requires not just micro-level responses of the 'yes-no' kind, but a perspective on, and a shaping of, the overall trajectory of development, and that I see to be the essential role of development planning.

The shaping of this trajectory would require the coordination of a multiple set of policies, not just fiscal, monetary, and public expenditure and investment policies, but policies relating to land reforms, to the setting up of appropriate organisational structures, both within the State as well as within the private sector, to the conscious acquisition and dissemination of information to petty producers who have little access to it, to technology and export thrusts (since exports are not a matter of prices alone), and to the imposition of a limited set of controls, relating in particular to capital flows, certain kinds of imports, and end use of resources such as land. The word 'controls' often arouses consternation these days, but there are certain areas in which no amount of fiscal or price-intervention can succeed in ensuring conformity of the end use of resources to widely-accepted social priorities.

### III

The pervasive disillusionment both with planning as well as with associated State ownership, nonetheless merits serious discussion. The typical argument against a planned regime with a significant public sector is that it is 'inefficient'. The concept of 'inefficiency' used in this criticism however is by no means a clear-cut one. A low or negative profitability does not obviously signify 'inefficiency' in any sense. Nor are we talking here merely of production taking place in the interior rather than on the boundary of the production possibility locus: insofar as in any capitalist economy (where production decisions are left to private enterprises guided by market signals) there exist both unemployment as well as unutilised capacity, production in a regime which may constitute an alternative to a planned regime also occurs in the interior of the production possibility locus. In other words, one has to distinguish between the market visualised, as in text-books, as a computer-analogue allocating scarce resources optimally to achieve given ends, and market economy as a real-life phenomenon which necessarily maintains unutilised resources as a means of enforcing the coercion that constitutes the *modus operandi* of the system. A real-life



market economy in other words also always produces in the interior of the production possibility set, so that one cannot attribute this characteristic exclusively to a planned economy.

Looking at it differently, one can distinguish between two different concepts of inefficiency: the first which figures in text-books is the inefficiency arising from the misallocation of fully-employed resources, and on this criterion a market economy does not necessarily perform better than a planned economy of any kind. The second concept is the concept of inefficiency arising from 'indiscipline', and any critique of a planned economy must be based on this criterion if at all.

The Hungarian economist Janos Kornai has written extensively on this theme, to the effect that the prevalence of a 'soft' budget constraint for enterprises in a planned economy inculcates a lack of discipline and hence promotes 'inefficiency'. Even here however one has to be careful. Kornai's work on socialist economies, which shows that the 'soft' budget constraint gives rise to the phenomenon of 'shortage', does not establish that this 'shortage' would be a secularly increasing phenomenon. If we have a constant rate of 'shortage', there is nothing to show that an economy so characterised is in any sense inferior in its performance to capitalist market economies characterised by a constant rate of unemployment arising from a 'hard' budget constraint faced by enterprises. In other words any criticism of a planned economic regime on the grounds that it 'softens' the budget constraint of enterprises, either over the economy as a whole or even over parts of it, is per se unconvincing since the alternative represented by 'hard' budget constraints and the 'discipline' of the market involves a wastage of resources in another form, and we cannot assert that the latter form of wastage is somehow 'better'.

A second argument one often comes across eschews references to 'efficiency' but faults a planned economy for its lack of 'innovativeness'. As far as third world countries are concerned however this argument is patently unconvincing. For most such economies which are in no position at the moment to undertake 'innovations' in frontier technologies, 'innovativeness' can only mean the absorption, assimilation and possible marginal improvements in keeping with local conditions, of technologies already developed elsewhere, and that too in selected areas. The capitalists in such economies often makes no efforts whatsoever even to achieve this limited objective; whatever efforts are made in this direction are undertaken under the aegis of the public sector. I speak on the basis of the Indian experience here: while the expenditure on research and development by private sector firms is on the whole negligible, whatever major successes in terms of developing domestic know-how have been achieved, say in fertilisers, or heavy electricals, or oil-exploration or off-shore drilling, have come through initiatives in the public sector. To be sure, it can be argued that the domestic capitalist class has shown no

initiatives precisely because it has been sheltered behind protectionist walls, and that the point is not to compare the innovativeness of the public sector with that of a sheltered capitalist sector, but to compare a sheltered economy with one that is exposed to the blasts of international competition. But this exposure to international competition through a 'liberal' economic regime, as we have seen, brings in its train a process of de-industrialisation, debt and deflation, so that the presumed gain in innovativeness pales into complete insignificance.

A third argument which is advanced in support of the charge that planned economies are inferior, runs as follows: a growing economy, no matter how much it attempts (even to the point of abandoning wisdom) to be autarkic, cannot do without a growing import-bill. To the extent that the management of the economy is oriented towards expanding the home-market and giving primacy to increased production for it, its export efforts suffer, so that its growth-rate, while it may be impressive for a short while, necessarily becomes unsustainable. This may be fair criticism of past experiences of development planning, but is not a logical point. There can be little doubt that one of the characteristics of development planning, at any rate in its early states, was a discrimination in favour of production for the domestic market and against exporting. The entire exercise of development planning was based in many countries on an assumption of export pessimism; the Mahalanobis model in India comes readily to mind as an example. Whether or not such an assumption was justified in the long-run, it did mean foregoing of opportunities in the short-run. But pessimistic assumptions about the possibilities offered to a country by the global economy are not endemic to a planned regime. Indeed one lesson from the past is that a conscious planning of export must be a part of any planning exercise. In any case, no matter what the precise contours of the planned economy may be, there can be little quarrel over the fact that activities related exclusively to exports, whosoever they are undertaken by, should be outside the purview of any controls and should be left free to acquire whatever foreign exchange they require (provided they are net foreign exchange earners).

All of the foregoing however represents negative argumentation. Against the criticism of the operation of a planned system in practice, I have only argued that the alternative to the planned system does not necessarily perform any better. But the fact that planning in practice may look quite different from the idealised picture on the basis of which the case for planning was made in section I of this paper is both undeniable as well as significant. Putting it differently, the case for planning was made earlier in this paper, and has been made in the entire literature on planning, on the basis of an idealised conception of the State as a pure embodiment of reason, while the instrumentality through which planning is undertaken in practice is a concrete State

apparatus, with concrete personnel manning its economic organs and the enterprises owned by it, whose motivations and actions produce a sum total of results quite at variance with what the idealised picture would suggest. The question naturally arises: how much strength does the analytical case for planning retain when we take cognisance of the concrete nature of the third world State? Or putting it differently, can any case for planning be convincing unless we simultaneously discuss how the results of planning in practice can be made to approximate those envisaged ideally?

There are to my mind two inter-related problems here, at least in the context of a third world economy. The first concerns the question of work-ethic and work-motivation in State-owned enterprises and in State-financed projects generally. The motive for work in a capitalist market economy is the fear of being unemployed; the market exercises a coercion precisely because resources are not fully utilised. But if we are talking of a planned system whose entire *raison d'être* is the provision of security to every one, then unless an alternative basis for work-motivation exists, the system is bound to perform poorly. Such an alternative basis can in principle be provided by the fact of the working people becoming conscious of collectively shaping their own destiny, i.e. if the opaqueness of the relationships mediated through the State in a planned system is dissolved. But a bureaucratic exercise in planning where the State directs resources into different avenues reinforces rather than dissolves this opaqueness. Alienated from the State and freed from the harshness of market-coercion, the working people, especially the organised workers, in the State sector, can well find their work-motivation getting diluted.

A second factor, far more important in itself, also contributes to this process. In a mixed underdeveloped economy attempting to operate a planned system, the bourgeoisie seeks to use the State as an instrument for 'primitive accumulation of capital', or what I prefer to call 'primitive acquisitiveness' (since the term 'primitive accumulation' often conjures up the image of a subsequent successful transition to vigorous industrial capitalism). In this effort, it is aided by the bureaucracy which is at the helm of affairs and which is itself composed of proto-bourgeois elements. Private enrichment through the use of the State apparatus does not however result in a substitution of private investment in priority areas for State investment; it does not even result necessarily in private productive investment of any sort. Real estate, speculative activities of various kinds, conspicuous consumption especially of commodities fashionable in metropolitan centres, constitute the more favoured avenues of expenditure for private economic surplus. This both breeds cynicism among the working people, sapping their commitment to the vision of social transformation through planning and undermining their work-motivation, as well as distorts the actual trajectory of development of the economy away from

that visualised in the planning process, thus giving rise to additional strains manifesting themselves inter alia in the form of an increase in the capital-output ratio (a symptom of the so-called 'inefficiency'). It is in contexts such as these that the pressure for reintroducing the 'discipline of the market' through a 'liberalisation' of the economy gathers strength. While the social support for a planned regime disappears through the spread of cynicism and alienation among the working masses, even outside of the international lending agencies and their local supporters, the idea begins to spread that there exists no alternative to the 'discipline of the market', especially the 'world market'.

As a matter of fact however, subjecting the economy to the so-called 'discipline of the world market' amounts, as we have seen, to jumping out of the frying pan straight into the fire. The case for planning remains as strong as ever, but it is a case simultaneously for enlisting the support of the working masses for a planned transformation, for institutionalising arrangements whereby they can intervene successfully to prevent the framework of planning from being utilised for the satisfaction of privative acquisitiveness by elements of the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. A democratic society is of course essential for this. In addition, the direct involvement of the working people in the decision making process, including through appropriate decentralisation of planning, is essential. For a South Africa emerging into democracy and majority rule, it is as important to resist pressures for instituting a 'liberal economy' vulnerable to the caprices of international financiers, as it is to avoid re-enacting the scenario of bureaucratic, dirigiste planning that is used increasingly over time for private enrichment through the instrumentality of the State, and soon discredits itself. But the very strength of the democratic movement here which makes the case for planning strong, also provides the possibility of a powerful check upon its degeneration.

ARUN GHOSH\*

## *Economic Adjustment: A Programme for the Medium Term*

There are three aspects of economic adjustment over the medium term for any economy: first, the restoration of balance between aggregate demand and supply in the economy; secondly, and this is an extension of the first, the restoration of balance in external payments; and finally, an improvement of efficiency and productivity and therefore in the competitiveness of the economy. Since the immediate, short term balance of payments problem has been the cause of the greatest anxiety over the past year or so, this issue would be considered first. At the same time, the persistent inflationary trends observed in the economy—despite four consecutive good monsoons and four years of satisfactory improvement in industrial production—need to be addressed with firmness. This issue would be relevant for the balance of payments also because an excess of demand in the economy (in money terms) is likely to spill over to the balance of payments through an excess of imports over exports. The issue of increased efficiency and productivity—which, in a way, is the rationale for any adjustment programme—would be considered last.

### BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

The foreign exchange assets of the Reserve Bank of India, as on December 27, 1991, were Rs. 9473 crore (or approximately Rs. 9500 crore), as per the Weekly Statistical Supplement of the RBI Bulletin of January 11, 1992. Foreign exchange reserves are now officially stated to have reached the level of more than Rs. 10,000 crore, which is around three months import requirement. With this level of reserves, it is now possible to breathe more freely, provided that we do not fritter away the reserves. With this level of reserves, we should also endeavour to gradually restructure our external payments obligations, and manage our external payments in such a manner that: (a) we do not get into the sort of position that we did in June–July 1991, and (b) that we manage our exports and imports sensibly, taking note of both the internal and international situation.

---

\*Former Member of Planning Commission.

The most vital consideration in this context is the overhang of short maturity external debt that we have managed to contract from the late eighties, even to pay for current imports. The volume of such borrowing is understood to have reached some \$5 billion by 1989-90, through borrowings by the ONGC, OIL, IPCL and other government companies with good credit rating, as well as by the State Bank of India—all in order to enable the government to make payments for current imports. Such borrowing has since come down, and a good guess would be that some \$3 to 4 billion of such short term loans—of maturity periods varying from 6 months to 18 months—are still outstanding. The aim of the government should be to gradually convert such loans into medium/long term liabilities where possible, and to pay off such loans where they cannot be converted into longer maturity loans. It must be remembered that at current exchange rates, the total value of such loans would probably be close to the official exchange reserves of around Rs. 10,000 crore.

It is in this context that the one thing that the government should *not* do is to liberalise imports more than necessary for increasing exports and giving a thrust to domestic production capability. The recent transfer of imports of automotive components and components of electronic consumer goods from the Exim scrip category to the OGL is in this context, entirely unwarranted. One does not know whether the government is knuckling down under pressure from vested interests in India or from the World Bank/IMF, in opening up imports of elitist consumer goods components, thereby increasing the volume and value of relatively less essential imports at this critical juncture. For, it is noteworthy that during April-October 1991, India's exports *declined* in dollar terms by 6.6 per cent. It is difficult, as of writing, to say categorically how much of this decline has been the result of a deterioration in the terms of trade, but certainly, this has been a factor. The grant of Exim-scrips on *all* exports—at a minimum of 30 per cent of the value of exports—in terms of the policy announced on July 4, following close on the heels of a 20 per cent devaluation in the exchange value of the rupee over July 1-3, 1991, has led to a fall in tea prices, iron ore prices, garment prices, in fact of most export prices, in terms of foreign exchange.

There are certain irreversibilities in life which make it futile to ponder over alternatives which are no longer available. The increase in costs and prices within India over the past six months would have in any case required a steady depreciation in the exchange rate of the rupee if we had desired to keep up the growth rate of exports (in dollar terms) achieved over 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90. Equally, it is no longer relevant to consider what might have happened in the absence of the twin policies of a sharp devaluation, and the transfer of a large percentage of Actual User imports to imports against Exim scrips issued in favour of all exports, since early July 1991. If this point has

relevance today, it is because of the lessons in regard to future action; and these lessons are, first, that for most traditional exports of India supplies are *not* very elastic and cannot be expected to more than offset a deterioration in the terms of trade; secondly, that the external demand for all other types of exports from India is not very elastic either—for instance, one cannot suddenly increase the demand for, say, Indian iron ore abroad, which depends on a variety of factors—and thirdly, that the international environment may not be very conducive to a sustained growth of all Indian exports in the coming years. As a result, we need to be selective in regard to the thrust to be given to sectors with export potential, and to be careful in regard to large scale import liberalisation.

It follows that if such import liberalisation be a pre-condition to the grant of a large Structural Adjustment Loan (by the World Bank) or an Extended Fund Facility loan, we should, in the light of our experience in regard to exports, eschew taking such loans. We must be cognisant of the fact that we have not only to liquidate the overhang of short term loans incurred in the past, but also to start repaying the IMF/World Bank loans three years from the date of borrowing, and over a period varying from two years to seven years (for the Upper Tranche loan/Structural Adjustment loan respectively).

In brief, then, a medium term adjustment in regard to our external payments would require: (a) a carefully planned consolidation of short maturity debts into medium/long term loans; and with the present low LIBOR rates, and with international confidence in India restored very largely, this should not present too great a difficulty; (b) a continued compression of imports, and certainly not a sudden opening up of the floodgates of imports of the type witnessed during the second half of the eighties; (c) a carefully modulated thrust for exports, taking care to see that the concessions granted to exporters do not lead to a deterioration of the terms of trade, and in particular, paying attention to the growth of production and exports in sectors where our supplies are likely to be elastic in the medium term; and (d) a set of measures calculated to bring a better balance between domestic demand and domestic availabilities, which would help to curb inflation in all prices, the key to which would appear to be the curbing of the 'expectation' of continued inflation in the economy.

#### MACRO ECONOMIC BALANCE WITHIN THE ECONOMY

Three inter-related aspects of the problem of balance between aggregate demand and supply must be mentioned at the outset. First, for the past several years, the increase in monetary circulation has been significantly in excess of output growth, and as a result, there is a considerable overhang of excess liquidity in the Indian economic system today. Secondly, much of this liquidity is in the form of untaxed (or

black) money, which diverse schemes of amnesty have totally failed to bring into the regular stream of taxed incomes and wealth. Thirdly, to the extent that inflation feeds on the 'expectation' of inflation—and to the extent that there exists considerable liquidity for speculative stock holding—there seems to be no let up in the increase in *all* prices, including the prices of consumer goods in respect of which there is no hint of a shortage in supplies.

There are two other factors in this scenario of rising prices. There is so far no abatement in the budgetary deficit of the central government. Over April 1–December 13, 1991, net RBI credit to the government increased by Rs. 14,004 crore. This is significantly higher than the figure budgeted for the full year April 1991–March 1992. There is very little evidence of any compression in government current expenditure. Rather, there is the likelihood of a fairly sharp cut back in investment on infrastructure, in particular, for the modernisation of the railways, for augmenting power supply, for the production of coal and oil. Furthermore, it is said that as part of the 'restructuring' of the Indian economy, the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) of banks is to be brought down over a period of five years, from 38.5 per cent to 25 per cent. This factor alone will—at the figure of deposits of all scheduled banks on 27 December 1991—make for a resource gap of government (after five years) of Rs. 30810 crore.

What is required today is a fiscal/monetary strategy which concentrates on the following: first, a significant improvement in government revenue; second, a definite and visible reduction in government's consumption expenditure and maintenance/expansion of crucial infrastructural spending; and third, on all-out effort to curb untaxed (black) money.

This last point needs to be elaborated upon. A drive to unearth black money is likely to have two beneficial effects. Apart from augmenting government's tax revenues, any systematic (and sustained) drive to unearth black money is likely to drive such funds into unused idle hoards; and so long as such hoards are unused, they would immediately lead to a corresponding reduction in the excess liquidity in the system. In the process, two birds will be killed with one stone. Government revenues would improve, and correspondingly, the revenue deficit (as well as the over-all deficit) of the central government are likely to decline. To the extent that 'Reserve Money' creation as a result of government's budgetary operations is limited, the creation of additional liquidity in the economy would also be dampened.

There is yet another aspect to this problem. The typical prescription of international lending agencies (like the IMF) in a situation of BOP and internal budgetary imbalance is the raising of interest rates and the imposition of ceilings on credit creation. This prescription works in an 'overheated' developed economy, especially because (in countries with convertible currencies) the higher interest rate attracts foreign



funds which both restore equilibrium in the balance of payments and provide the working capital needs for production. There are, of course, some bankruptcies arising from the higher interest rate, a factor which reduces the 'overheating' of the economy. In India, the steep increase in interest rates is unlikely to lead to any inflow of foreign funds, but is already having a seriously adverse effect on industry generally and on small scale industries in particular. This is only likely to usher in a period of stagflation, for the curtailment of productive activity is not likely to help in an inflationary situation, with reduced output.

The medium term restructuring programme, therefore, has to draw obvious lessons from the above broad scenario. First, there has to be a systematic effort to raise government revenue. This implies two types of action. First, while reliance on indirect taxes—which has been increasing of late—is likely to raise prices, the level of import tariffs cannot suddenly be reduced drastically, partly for revenue reasons and partly because such action would immediately lead to an increase in imports (to the detriment of the balance of payments situation). Reduction in import duties has to be both gradual and so structured as to have the lowest rates for raw materials, somewhat higher rates for components, even higher rates for all capital goods, and the highest (and for a while, even prohibitory) rates for finished consumer goods. Secondly, there is the need to rely on raising more direct taxes which today constitute only 10 per cent of the total revenues of the government.

There is a widespread feeling that direct taxes in India are already high, and that better compliance can occur only by reducing the tax rates. Various studies have shown that there is no correlation between lower tax rates and better tax collection. *Simplicity* in the matter of taxes, and greater transparency (with fewer deductions) can help. But essentially, the tax collection machinery has to be geared to collection; and political will is necessary to take penal action against tax evaders—who are known and can be easily identified because of their lifestyle. We need to realise in this context that tax evaders are also the financiers of the politicians during elections, and that is why we need to change the election laws as well as emphasize the importance of political will for unearthing black money.

Secondly, there has to be a determined effort to curb government consumption expenditure, as well as subsidies to sectors/segments of the population which do not need to be subsidised. Subsidies are justified only where either they help to keep down the prices of essential consumer goods generally through increased production and availability, or help to protect the consumption of specified target groups (such as, say, marginal farmers, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes people).

The third essential element in medium term restructuring is *not* to use monetary instruments to do duty for inadequacies in fiscal policy. As argued above, in any strategy for adjustment, fiscal policy must be so

designed as to flush out black money. If the taxes due can be collected on incomes generated in what has come to be known as the 'parallel economy', our budgetary deficit could well get fully eliminated. Even if all the taxes due on untaxed incomes do not get collected, it would still be useful to drive untaxed incomes into becoming 'idle hoards', which would immediately reduce the excess liquidity in the system, and help to bring down prices.

There is, of course, some danger that too sudden or too steep a reduction of liquidity in the system could lead to a recession. However, again, the solution lies in fiscal policy. If the drive for collection of taxes leads to a sudden large surplus in the revenue budget—which may not really come about suddenly—there is always scope for: (a) cutting indirect taxes, in particular excise duties, and (b) stepping up investment in areas hitherto neglected, like employment generation for small local works, education, maternity and child health care, and diverse other social services which may help to improve the long term prospects of development. There is special need to find resources, even in the medium term, for putting together a meaningful employment guarantee programme which may be used for local area development planning, especially in the presently degraded areas, where a lot of labour is necessary for land reshaping, contour bunding, planting of saplings, diverse small works to improve the availability of water and the moisture retention capacity of the soil. In the urban areas similarly there is enormous need and scope for urban renewal and urban development which would require significant funding primarily for the employment of unskilled labour.

Control over inflation is an essential ingredient of any medium term adjustment programme; and failure to curb inflation will set to nought all other policies calculated to restructure the economy. Macro balance in the economy—in the Indian framework—cannot be achieved through tighter monetary policy. What is required is the restoration of fiscal balance, the exercise of fiscal discipline by the government. In today's situation, this calls for a frontal attack on untaxed incomes which have numerous pernicious effects. Apart from the iniquity of the tax burden falling only on the law abiding citizens, such incomes are generally used for either speculative stock holding—leading to inflationary price increases—or for investment in undesirable channels, thereby distorting the pattern of investments away from a socially desirable one, to one catering to ostentatious and vulgar consumerism; meeting elitist demands (to the exclusion of mass demand for essential consumer goods) and in fact meeting primarily the needs of a closed circuit of black marketeers and tax evaders.

## RAISING THE LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS OF THE ECONOMY

The medium term adjustment of the economy clearly requires a macro balance between aggregate domestic demand and supply. But in the modern world, with rapid changes in technology, we also need to raise the level of efficiency of production and of international competitiveness of our production structure. But the 'restructuring' of the economy involved in such a transformation has to proceed on lines which will help to improve the efficiency of all workers, in all sectors of the economy.

This calls for primacy of attention to the more important elements in the over all cost structure rather than over-emphasis on the micro problems of a few industries. In fact, it is necessary to go into the roots of the problem of efficiency.

Even limiting oneself to the segment of industry, the most important element in efficiency of production would be the efficiency of infrastructure. Not only are the costs of infrastructure an important element of industrial costs, the efficiency of infrastructure is equally important in raising the overall productivity of labour in all production activity. For example, not only is it important to keep down the cost of energy, but the quality and dependability of energy supply is crucial to the efficiency of industrial production. Not only are freight rates important for keeping down costs, better transport and communications can help to keep down inventories, reduce working capital requirements (and thereby costs) and help to improve the overall efficiency of the production structure.

External economies—which depend, in Max Weber's celebrated concept; on the industrial *tempo*—are a major factor in the over all costs of production of any sector of production. And a major factor in external economies is the factor of skill of workers generally, not limited to an industrial undertaking in isolation.

It is this factor which underscores the need to encourage Research and Development, to depend on indigenous design engineering to lay down the basis of growth of the capital goods and key intermediate industries. Innovation follows such development automatically, when the over-all atmosphere is pervaded by 'professionalism', by scientific and technological skills permeating through all levels of production. Innovations do not occur in a vacuum, they keep tumbling, one after the other, in an atmosphere of healthy competition, with increasing application of science and technology in the production process.

This is a scenario totally different from blind import of technology, of imitation of technologies developed abroad without reference to either our resource endowment or the level of our skills. Only one example may be cited in this connection. At a time when we were producing urea in relatively small plants (of something like 600 tonnes of ammonia capacity per day), which could be produced and set up

indigenously and maintained without a hitch, we elected to go in for a size of 1350 tonnes of ammonia per day (on the ground of greater efficiency). In the process, not only did we have to procure complete plants (and get them erected by foreign technologists), we could not operate the plants at full capacity. Apart from teething problems, even routine maintenance suddenly posed a problem. With less than optimum utilisation of capacity, the advantage of better technology was not only lost, costs per unit in fact soared precipitately. In retrospect, it also transpired that the technology purchased by us was inherently defective. As compared to recent inventions (made by an expatriate Indian) wherein small plants of 400-600 tonnes of ammonia capacity per day have an energy consumption of 6.7 million kilocalories per tonne of ammonia, our much touted purchase of technology from Snamprogetti (for ammonia) and Halдар-Topsoe (for urea), with 1350 tonnes of ammonia capacity per day, has been using 8.5 million kilo calories of energy per tonne of ammonia. In the process, we have ignored the expertise and demoralised the expert teams of scientists, design engineers and technologists, which we had assiduously built up at PDIL and FEDO, the two organisations concerned with design, development and erection of fertiliser plants in the country.

On the other hand, organisations like the IPCL or Larsen & Toubro have developed into path breaking giants in their fields, by assiduous encouragement of a team of scientists and technologists, capable of designing, manufacturing and erecting complex industrial plants.

The above examples are being cited only to reinforce the argument that efficiency of production does not necessarily follow either the import of the latest technology or of the latest plant and equipment. It is necessary first to absorb, adopt and adapt the technology and thereafter to develop it further. All this can only be done if there is a team of scientists and technologists made responsible for such development, if technology import is selectively pursued—at the instance of these self-same scientists and technologists—and if there is Research, Development and Design Engineering back-up for every instance of technology import; so as to make it relevant to Indian conditions.

We cannot become industrially efficient merely by importing the latest technology or the latest plant and equipment if, at the drop of a hat we have to fly in a foreign technician to remove every bug that may appear in the actual process of production, after the latest imported plant and equipment is installed.

In other words, the medium term adjustment programme must adopt and mesh with the strategy for long term development of the economy. And part of the strategy must follow the path shown by South Korea, of positive intervention by the State, of selective import of technology and its assiduous absorption and development by indigenous scientists and technologists, of carefully selecting a few target sectors and going in with vigour for both import substitution and export promotion in

these target sectors, keeping in mind the pattern of demand likely to emerge in the developed countries, so that we can make successful inroads into their markets with better and more competitive products.

At the same time, no medium term restructuring effort can succeed unless two essential pre-requisites are met. We must, first, deal with the problem of employment and incomes, without which social discontent and absence of mass demand would act as strong deterrents to large scale investment and production. Secondly, we must make a serious effort at raising the level of education and the raising of skills. A few isolated pockets of industrial excellence are not likely to lead to a general raising of industrial productivity and industrial efficiency. We do have a few such pockets of industrial excellence. But, in order to reap the full benefits of external economies we must build up the level of skills generally. This is what Max Weber meant by the concept of developing an *industrial tempo* through 'infant country' protection.

In the above context, the importance of social infrastructure, and the crucial role of government spending for developing social infrastructure, is generally not appreciated. The level of general education—and with it the level of skills—and the level of the economic development of a country are found to be strongly correlated. No country with a high level of education is found to be lacking in economic development. Equally, good health is essential for higher productivity of labour. Higher levels of income and education are also associated with low rates of population growth. Somehow, we in India have neglected development of social infrastructure. We have paid scant attention to education, health, sanitation, even the supply of clean potable water, thus exposing a large part of the population to common diseases. In seeking an adjustment of our economic structure without raising the general level of education and health, we would end up in an equilibrium at a very low level of income. We would thereby be disregarding the very purpose of adjustment. Any programme of adjustment must be deemed to be a *means* to the objective of the development of the Indian people. It would therefore be a mistake to merely talk in terms of 'safety nets' to protect the vulnerable sections of society during the process of adjustment. There is need to accord priority, in any scheme of adjustment, to the development of social infrastructure so that the squeeze is on the consumption of the better off sections of society.

To sum up, our medium term adjustment policy must mesh into our longer term development programme. 'Adjustment' has to have an objective. That objective has to be over-all economic development on egalitarian lines, an improvement of the quality of life for all the people. This means that any viable medium term adjustment programme for India needs to take note of three basic parameters:

SURENDRA J. PATEL\*

*Statement to the Group of Ministers  
on Arthur Dunkel's Draft of the Final Act  
on Uruguay Round of GATT Negotiations\*\**

It is an honour for me to be invited by the Cabinet Sub-Committee for a discussion of the Draft of the Final Act, presented by Mr Arthur Dunkel, Director General of GATT. I am pleased to learn that this meeting is taking place in response to the desire of the Prime Minister to initiate a broad discussion on the final act on the Uruguay Round of Negotiations in GATT. I very much hope that this discussion will involve not only a select few, but also the Parliament, the press, the political parties as well as wide sectors of our people.

While I am honoured to be invited to come here, I am also distressed to witness India being placed at a difficult crossroads. The choices before the government and the country are severe. The turn that is taken at this critical juncture will have far-reaching consequences for our future development in the economic, social and political spheres.

What is happening in GATT has a long background. It would be useful, I think, to keep this background in mind so that we can better appreciate the full implications of the GATT negotiations. I will then comment on selected issues in the Dunkel Draft Text (DDT) and conclude with a few observations.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE URUGUAY ROUND

As a Director of the Technology Division of UNCTAD, and thereby in charge of UNCTAD's work on technology policies (1969 to 1984), I had the privilege of participating in the debates in the United Nations and UNCTAD which preceded the current GATT negotiations.

I was also privileged to be associated with successive generations of very able and devoted diplomats from India and other countries of the South, who from the inception of UNCTAD in 1964, have contributed so much to the South's negotiations to restructure the very unfair and inequitable international economic relations among countries.

---

\*Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad-54.

\*\*This is a revised text of the oral presentation to the Group of Ministers on January 23, 1992.

The rich countries had for two centuries dominated the international scene. Following the tidal wave of colonial liberation in the post second world war period, the developing countries recognised themselves as the Group of 77. They initiated in the United Nations and in UNCTAD a wide series of negotiations with the West aimed at establishing a New International Economic Order (NIEO). I need not go into the details of all the initiatives that the Group of 77, as it came to represent the developing countries, launched in that Golden Age (1966-1980) of the south's entry on the world scene. That was the age we could be proud of. But public memories are so short that there is a danger of forgetting them altogether.

This background is pertinent to what is happening now. The Uruguay Round is in a sense an act of turning the negotiations on the NIEO upside down. The developing countries had gone through a disastrous decade during the 1980s. They had been burdened by falling export prices caused by recessions in the West, severe balance of payments crises, budgetary deficits and heavy external debt. They were forced to borrow from both the IMF and the World Bank, and submit to their structural adjustment programmes. (What a historical hijacking of names this was, since the very notion of structural change was the contribution of the developing countries). This, however, is not the place to discuss the South's crisis.

Taking advantage of the difficulties of the South, of its despair and disarray, rich countries like proverbial money lenders, siezed the initiative in the 1980s. They opened a new front by slamming the door on the North-South negotiations to establish the NIEO. It was the period when the growing movement towards accommodation and development co-operation between the North and South was destroyed. The Third World was in disarray. The rich countries started their own offensive. They changed both the stage and the substance of the North-South negotiations. Over 50 countries, desperate for foreign loans, had to accept the IMF's and the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes.

It was against this background that the conservative governments in the West launched the Uruguay Round of Negotiations in GATT. The United Nations and UNCTAD, the universal fora for the North-South, were dumped and GATT, an obscure organisation till then, was reasserted. GATT, which was upto that time a small, sleepy organisation, housed in its make-shift quarters in the shadow of UNCTAD and the Palais des Nations, was made by the West the central body for most far-reaching negotiations.

It is important to recall that while this shift in the stage was being made, the North-South negotiations had come a long way. The revision of the Paris Convention to bend it to serve the development interests of South countries, the Code of Conduct on technology, and the code for transnational corporations had made considerable progress

towards their completion. But the United States led the way for the Uruguay Round of Negotiations, which effectively slammed the door on all aspects of restructuring the global economic relations between the rich and the poor countries.

The stage was changed from the United Nations system to the clubs of the rich countries—the GATT and the IMF and the World Bank. The United States spearheaded the drive to negotiate in GATT a vast package of issues, which were mostly out of the competence of GATT. In place of its earlier somewhat boring work on tariff reductions, the GATT was now made the centre-piece to re-establish more firmly—and not to change—the earlier unfair international order. The GATT was chosen because the developing countries did not have the advantage of being organized there, as in the United Nations system, as the Group of 77. Moreover, GATT offered leverage for pressure by the West, as it could use GATT's provisions for trade sanctions across the board, including cross retaliation.

In the name of trade, and the over-extended trade distortions, the GATT under the Uruguay Round of Negotiations was to deal with very wide basket of subjects, such as agriculture, commodity trade with special emphasis on textiles, investment measures, intellectual property rights, trade in services, new rules for GATT, and the creation of a multi-lateral trade organisation.

Four years of negotiations upto the autumn of 1991 in GATT had left many issues unresolved. It was then that Mr Arthur Dunkel, the Director General of GATT, presented his draft of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round, as a package on a 'take it or leave it' basis.

This background is of critical importance for assessing the present stage and the substance of the negotiations. In conclusion, it can thus be seen that there was a change in the stage of the play—from the United Nations to the trinity of the GATT, IMF, and the World Bank. There was at the same time in addition, a change in the very substance of the play. That Draft Final Act of Mr Arthur Dunkel is not for promoting development co-operation and accommodating the entry of the developing countries on the world stage. Instead, it is aimed at establishing insidious control over the decision-making processes in the countries of the South. That is, the process of 're-colonisation' has now begun.

#### THE DUNKEL DRAFT TEXT (DDT) SELECTED ISSUES

The subject coverage in the Dunkel Draft Text (DDT) is so wide that I will have to be severely selective. I will take up agriculture and intellectual property rights in some detail because they affect the very vital sectors of our economy—agriculture and industry. Other subjects will then have to be discussed only in a summary fashion.



*(1) Agricultural development*

The Dunkel Draft Text will pose some very serious problems to our future agricultural development. The overwhelming majority of our people live in the countryside. Agriculture for them is not merely a means of survival, but is indeed a way of life. No wonder our government always attached a very high priority to overcoming our food insecurity. Import dependence under U.S. PL-480 was to be rapidly replaced by the development of our agriculture. We therefore pioneered the 'Green Revolution'. Agricultural output rose three-fold. India became a model for the agricultural development of the South countries.

How was this vast upsurge of agriculture promoted? The government took the initiative. Our research and development network was set in motion. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research was activated. Generation after generation of new varieties of high-yielding seeds were developed. Input packages, combining seeds, fertilisers and pesticides were evolved. The government played an active role in organising the research, in extending irrigation, in providing credit facilities on easy terms for agricultural instruments and for the purchase of agricultural machinery and implements. It gave price support and adequate marketing facilities. It gave much-needed subsidies for irrigation, water, power, fertilisers, pesticides, farm equipment etc. so that our agriculture would prosper. This is old history, but it is recalled to appreciate how the DDT will affect future development.

If the Dunkel Draft Text is accepted, all this will be undermined. Our network of past policies will have to be scrapped or seriously modified. This would include subsidies for irrigation, water, power, fertilisers, pesticides, credits, price-support schemes, building up buffer stocks. Our Public Distribution System will have to be seriously altered. India's domestic market will have to be opened up for imports of food products from the outside.

Not only that, the Dunkel Draft proposes that seeds, plants and biogenetic substances and innovations will have to be patented, or given patent-like protection. Genetically modified living organisms will have to be patented. Germ plasm, originating in the developing countries will be privatised, developed and patented by external multinational corporations. India would have to import seeds, plants and all the advances flowing from new biogenetic research. The costs of such imports, imposed by the giant multinational corporations, will be high. Such dependence, in the vital area of agricultural development will have very serious consequences.

The DDT favours the interests of the developed countries. It does not make any distinction between the interests of the rich countries and the development needs of the third world countries. The subsidies in the

Western countries are intended to raise farm incomes and build up unmarketable surpluses of food supplies. They then give more subsidies to sell the surpluses in the world market. In the developing countries, the position is different. Their need, in contrast, is to raise food output to feed the people, to attain a degree of food security to tide over poor harvests in times of bad weather. Their need is to establish a network of Public Distribution System to supply food at reasonable prices to the vast majority of their people.

Mr Dunkel's draft shows no concern for India's need to assure its agricultural development and food security. Its acceptance will sweep away all the policies and institutional structures which we have at great sacrifice, built since Independence to ensure our agricultural progress.

## (2) *Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)*

GATT had never seriously dealt with intellectual property rights. The legitimate fora for these were UNCTAD and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). It should be recalled here that as early as 1961, India had joined Brazil in calling for a close examination of the adverse effects the patent system may have on the development of the third World countries. There was much subsequent discussion in UNCTAD on the need to change the patent system so as to serve the development interests of the South. India took the lead and changed in 1970 its old patent law, the early origin of which dated back to 1858—a 'gift' given by the British rulers a few months after the suppression of the Insurrection of 1857.

After Independence, the adverse impact of that patent law was closely examined by two committees—the Justice Bakshi Takchand Committee (1948) and the Justice Rajgopal Ayyanger Committee (1957). They found that the patent system granted import monopolies to foreign enterprises. After the reports of these two committees, there were long discussions in the Joint Select Committees of the Parliament, and in both the Houses. Two decades of intensive discussions had taken place before the Indian Patents Act of 1970 was adopted. In many ways, this Act was rather modest in the changes it proposed. But soon it became a model for other developing countries. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Egypt and several other developing countries framed their patent laws on the Indian model. Whenever I visited the countries of the south in all the three developing continents, I felt proud to receive vicariously compliments from these countries to India on its new patent law.

It is important therefore to recall the main features of this law which has become India's national heritage based on the national consensus arrived after long consideration. Its main features may be briefly summarized here:

- (i) The Patents Act (1970) changed the very objective of the patent system. No longer was it to serve only the external interests. The new patent system was to become an instrument of our own national development;
- (ii) The patents were to be granted for promoting their use in the national production system, and not merely for granting import monopolies;
- (iii) In order to promote the use of foreign patents in our country, the system of compulsory licenses was strengthened (section 84);
- (iv) A novel system of licence of right (article 87) was introduced to overcome weaknesses and the enormous delays involved in obtaining compulsory licences. Provisions were also made for the revocation of patent grants (article 89). The Patent Act changed the very operation of the patent system in several ways, for instance:
  - (a) It excluded from patentability a wide variety of items in order to safeguard public interest, agriculture, food, medicine or drug and chemical products, atomic energy.
  - (b) Most important was its provision to exclude from patent grant products resulting from chemicals processes. Process, and not product patent became, as was the practice in all newly-developing countries of the nineteenth century, the established norm.
  - (c) It introduced a system of variable duration for the patent grant ranging from 5 to 15 years;
  - (d) It made the registration fee for the patent progressively proportionate to the economic importance of the patented innovation.

Soon after the establishment of the Indian Patents Act, the multinational corporations of the West mounted strong pressure on the Government of India to join the Paris Convention, and to amend the Patents Act.

The Dunkel Draft on intellectual property rights (TRIPs) wholly changes the very substance and the framework of the Indian Patents Act. Instead of strengthening our scientific and technological capabilities it moves towards scuttling them. Instead of promoting self-reliance (Gandhiji's call for Swadeshi), it will open the way for unlimited control by multinational corporations of our domestic market. Instead of giving us freedom to exclude certain sectors from patentability, it will force us to patent everything, including agricultural and biogenetic innovations. Instead of including only processes in patent grant, it will force us to extend patent protection also to products. Instead of reducing the duration of the patents, it will extend their term to 20 years. Instead of strengthening the system of

compulsory licensing and licence of right, it will practically abolish them. Instead of encouraging the use of patents at home, it will establish input monopolies. In short, instead of safeguarding our public interest, it will serve private interests of foreign corporations.

The patent law which helped our pharmaceutical and chemical development and formed the basis of our advances through our own research and development system, will have to be altered fundamentally. In consequence, the prices of drugs and pharmaceuticals, currently the lowest in the world, will sky-rocket. Several eminent jurists have said that the acceptance of the Dunkel draft will also require even changing our constitutional provisions. That is the reason why all political parties and as many as 250 members of Parliament—indeed a working majority in the current session—have come out against altering the Indian Patents Act, 1970.

### 3. *Trade-related Investment Measures (TRIMs)*

Dunkel Draft Text calls for foreign investors to be given the same treatment as our national investors. In legal terms, they are to be given equal national treatment. There will be no obligation on them to use our domestic resources, materials, semi-manufactured products, technical skills and managerial personnel. Nor will we be able to regulate the flow of dividends, and control transfer pricing through which the multinational corporations drain away the foreign exchange resources of developing countries. Many of our Acts (FERA and MRTP), for instance will have to be changed, or scrapped.

Let me just paint a picture of what could happen in India. I do not intend to be apocalyptic, but the scenario is not wholly unreal. Through structural adjustments imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, our public sector units are being privatised. In addition, we will have to follow a strict exit policy for a large number of our public as well as private enterprises which are sick. (Incidentally, many of the sick units of the private sector seems to be enjoying hospitalisation for public care.)

The IMF and World Bank induced recession in India could well force India into a situation under which consortia of the Western countries could, for \$10-20 billion establish dominant control in most of India's industrial units. \$10-20 billion, at the devalued rate of exchange would come to roughly 25 to 50 thousand crore rupees, an amount which is quite high for us as it is equal to 75 to 150 percent of India's exports and to 6 to 12 per cent of its GDP, and could well be almost equal to the total of the industrial assets which are traded on India's stock market. Therefore, 25-50 thousand crores of rupees is a huge sum for India. But \$10 to 20 billion is not so large a sum for any combination of the foreign banks and corporations. We need not forget the sharp public concerns in Europe at the invasion of American capital in the early post-war

years; nor should we overlook the deep American sentiments aroused recently against the invasion of Japanese capital in their country.

#### 4. *Services*

The Dunkel Draft on services opens up a wholly new avenue in world trade for controlling our economy. Upto now, only trade in goods was regulated by international conventions. There are no universal rules or disciplines for trade in services. The United States has led the drive to establish such rules for services mainly because it wants to promote the entry of its service corporations in banking, insurance, telecommunications, travel, transport, etc. in foreign countries. In these areas the US corporations have distinct comparative advantage. Such entry will at the same time undermine the public utilities and national enterprises which have played a central role in the developing countries (and indeed in Western Europe). The Dunkel Draft would force India to open its domestic markets for penetration by the multinational corporations. The entry of their service corporations will bring in its train the import of a package of equity capital, other equipment and other goods.

While forcing us to open our doors to the foreign service companies, the Dunkel Draft is silent on areas in which India has a comparative advantage, e.g. in consultancy services, in professional skills and even in labour services. It is argued that these areas are regulated by the immigration laws of the developed countries.

#### 5. *Textiles*

It is stated that India will get considerable advantages from the Dunkel proposals on textiles. We may examine them briefly. There will be no serious opening up of the Western markets in textiles during the transitional period of some 10 years. The Dunkel Draft postpones any serious opening up of trade in textiles to the end of the transitional period. Even then it offers only an uncertain liberalization in early 21st century. If this is offered as a concession, it is nothing less than a joke on the negotiators from the developing countries.

#### 6. *Multilateral Trade Organization (MTO)*

The most scandalous provision in the Dunkel document is the creation of a Multilateral Trade Organization (MTO). This institution in collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank will have the power to review our trade policies and practices. It will be empowered to impose retaliations and cross sanctions. It will no longer be necessary for the United States to use Special 301 for bilateral pressure of sanctions. The GATT will take this task over and universalize it—applicable to all countries.

The GATT will thus be added as another instrument for enforcing IMF and World Bank conditionalities for structural adjustment. The

Dunkel Draft indeed goes even further. It provides for GATT's collaboration with IMF and the World Bank in promoting, monitoring and enforcing the market based growth strategy for India. The trinity (IMF, World Bank and GATT) will then take charge of our policies for domestic development. Instead of home rule, we will have foreign rule—in a word, 're-colonisation'. These three will undermine our sovereignty. The decision-making processes for India's development will be externalized, even when some of the measures are introduced in an Indian voice. The age of colonial liberation will be replaced by the hegemony of development countries.

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In conclusion, I wish to underline that there is no basis on which the government can accept the Dunkel proposals without serious modification in them. The National Working Group on Patent Laws has mobilized our scientists, economists, lawyers, journalists, members of Parliament, leaders of political parties, non-governmental organizations and industrial bodies. They have asked the government repeatedly to take the people, the Parliament, the political parties and the press into confidence. To all these demands, the government has so far turned a deaf ear. The country is in disarray.

The silence of the government raises some very fundamental doubts. It would seem as if the government believes that it will be able to accept Dunkel proposals without strong domestic opposition. This will not be the case. It is time that the government informs GATT in no uncertain terms that India cannot accept the document on a 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis. It should specifically indicate the areas of India's disagreement with the Dunkel Draft Text. These will have to be renegotiated because they adversely affect the very livelihood and development interests of our people. India is too large a country to be dictated by foreign pressures, and the imposition of mechanical deadlines dictated by the calendar of American elections. Our long-term interests cannot be staked on such a flimsy time table. Ours is a large sovereign democratic country. We are a part of the international community of nations. We must therefore call for an intensive national debate on all the issues, both in the Parliament and outside.

Time is of the utmost importance. It is running out. The people, parliamentarians, the political parties and the press are all becoming restless. There is a massive upsurge of resentment against the exercise of the pressure from external institutions—the IMF, the World Bank and GATT. Our own government is echoing the voice of these outsiders. It is becoming a prisoner of these pressures, insensitive to the people's concerns. The GATT has now joined the IMF and the World Bank. We therefore urge the government to make it clear that it is the people of India, and not the external trinity, which is in charge here at home.

DEEPAK NAYYAR\*

## *The Dunkel Text\*\** *An Assessment*

### INTRODUCTION

The Director General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Mr. Arthur Dunkel, has presented the Draft of the Final Act on the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. This document represents the outcome of a process of negotiations that began more than five years ago, following the Ministerial Declaration on the Uruguay Round at Punta Del Este in September 1986. Thus, the Dunkel text is neither an intellectual construct nor received wisdom. It reflects the bargaining strengths or weaknesses of groups of countries at different levels of development and the dynamics of the negotiations over time. This has been tempered, to a limited extent, by the multipolar nature of the contemporary world economy, in particular the conflict on agriculture between the United States and the European Community.

It is essential for us, in India, to make a careful assessment of the document, which has far reaching implications and consequences for developing countries, in terms of our national interests. The object of my presentation on this subject is to highlight the strategic issues rather than to provide a systematic, let alone complete, discussion of the complex problems. To begin with, I shall situate the Dunkel text in the wider context of the political economy of the Uruguay Round. Then, I shall provide an assessment of the outcome embodied in the Dunkel text, with reference to our expectations. Thereafter, I shall elaborate on a few selected issues where the proposals in the Dunkel text are a cause for serious concern. In conclusion, I shall attempt to make some suggestions in terms of the options available to us at this juncture.

---

\*Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

\*\*This is a revised text of the author's oral presentation to the Group of Ministers on 23 January 1992.

## THE WIDER CONTEXT

It is necessary but not sufficient to recognise why and how the Uruguay Round is different from the earlier rounds of multilateral trade negotiations. The differences are much wider and deeper than its enlarged scope. The Uruguay Round is an ambitious and complex endeavor at many levels so that it is possible to miss the wood for the trees. In my judgement, an overall perspective is essential because the whole of the Uruguay Round is much greater than the sum total of its parts. Outside the limelight, in a setting of business as usual, the Uruguay Round is *de-facto* engaged in defining the parameters and writing the rules for international economic relations between countries at very different levels of development. It is a new international regime in the making that extends beyond the movement of goods across national boundaries to international flows of services, capital, technology, information and personnel. This is the outcome of a planned strategy and orchestrated tactics adopted by the major industrialised countries. The object of the exercise is to put together, piece by piece in a jigsaw, the structure of a new system with corresponding rules of the game, in conformity with the perception and the interests of the industrialised countries in the world economy.

The political economy of the Uruguay Round is easier to discern in the context of the new issues when juxtaposed with the moves for institutional reform and change. GATT type rules and principles, with provision for dispute settlement, compensation and retaliation, are sought to be extended to international trade in services, international investment flows and international transactions in technology. It is an altogether different world from the traditional concerns of GATT relating to border restrictions on trade in goods. The quest for international regimes of discipline on trade in services, trade-related investment measures and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights is closely inter twined with the interests of the transnational corporations, which are capital-exporters and technology-leaders in the world economy and for whom the new issues represent the final frontier in their global reach. The organisation of production, trade and distribution on a world scale requires the unfettered movement of not only goods but also services, capital, technology and information across national boundaries. From the viewpoint of transnational corporations, it is preferable that these rights are incorporated in multilateral frameworks, which give them legal rights, instead of bilateral concessions which they then would have to obtain through negotiations with national governments. It is plausible to suggest that the Uruguay Round represents a systematic endeavor on the part of the United States and the major industrialised countries to re-design the rules and the parameters which govern the functioning of the world economy, in part to suit the interests of transnational corporations for



whom distinctions between goods and services, trade and investment, or technology and information, are of no more than academic interest.

The thrust of the Uruguay Round, as embodied in the Dunkel text, extends far beyond the border paradigm of the GATT. The traditional concerns of the GATT were limited to international trade in goods. Countries negotiated market access at the border on a reciprocal basis and this was multilateralised through the GATT system. The international trading system now proposed extends beyond goods to services, technology, investment, and information. The result would be that market access in the industrialised countries, for goods exported by developing countries, which was guaranteed on a non-discriminatory basis (for sectors other than textiles and agriculture) under the GATT system, would now be conditional on the concessions that developing countries would be required to make in their intra-border economic regimes relating to investment, technology and services. In so far as this would imply a transgression of sovereign economic space, it constitutes a fundamental departure from the GATT regime.

#### EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOME

It is worth recalling that in the discussions which led up to Punta del Este, where the Uruguay Round was launched, the developing countries were by no means enthusiastic. Indeed, in the realm of the new issues, it would be no exaggeration to state that the developing countries were most reluctant. Yet, once the Uruguay Round became a reality, the developing countries in general, and India in particular, did have a perception about their objectives in the negotiations and expectations about the outcome. At this stage, when we evaluate Dunkel text, it is necessary to outline the objectives and make an assessment of the outcome in relation to expectations.

In my judgment, India had four sets of interests in the Uruguay Round. First, there were the positive interests, such as the dismantling of the MFA and the provision for labour mobility in an agreement on trade in services, where we sought to capture some gains. Second, there were the protective interests, such as the preservation of Article XVIII B and the maintenance, if not strengthening, of Part IV of the GATT, where we sought to maintain the status quo. Third, there were the negative interests, such as those associated with trade related intellectual property rights and trade related investment measures, where we sought to limit the damage arising out of the proposal for new regimes. Last but not least, there was agriculture, not quite an old issue and not quite a new issue, where our interests were mixed and in parts unclear. It would be reasonable to ask: how does the Dunkel text measure up to these expectations?

In the sphere of textiles, the dismantling of the MFA and a return to the GATT remains a distant promise. Indeed, there shall be no discernible gain in the form of increased market access, for seven years in the transition period of a decade. In substantive terms, liberalisation of international trade in textiles would begin only after the onset of the twenty-first century. This cannot be construed as a concession to the developing countries, even if we ignore the history of the past three decades which witnessed extensions of the MFA, in duration and scope, time after time.

In the proposed General Agreement on Trade in Services, there is nothing on labour mobility, which would allow us to exploit our comparative advantage in services. The movement of labour from developing countries to deliver services in the markets of industrialised countries is a matter for bilateral, sector by sector, negotiations. Given the immigration laws and the consular practices in the industrialised countries, the probability of success is almost negligible. In sharp contrast, the draft multilateral framework for trade in services caters to the interests of the industrialised countries, which have a revealed comparative advantage in capital-intensive or technology-intensive services, even if this implies changes in investment laws or technology policies, of developing countries.

Apropos the rules of international trading system embodied in the GATT, Article XVIII B remains but has been diluted in comparison with the present situation, in so far as the provisions for notification and justification are far more stringent. As for Part IV of the GATT, which commended rather than mandated special and differential treatment for developing countries, it stands abandoned. In the Dunkel text there is a special provision only for the least developed countries, so that other developing countries, such as India, which are contracting parties of the GATT, have been subjected to instant, *en bloc*, graduation.

It is clear that the Dunkel text belies our expectations in so far as we have neither managed to effectively promote our interests in textiles and services nor managed to adequately preserve our interests in the rules of the GATT system. It is not possible to elaborate further on these matters here. However, the outcome in the spheres of trade related intellectual property rights and agriculture provides cause for serious concern. These two issues deserve both recognition and emphasis, because technology is strategic in the process of industrialisation and agriculture remains a source of livelihood for the majority of our people.

The uniform regime for the protection of intellectual property rights, proposed in the Dunkel text, would mean important departures from the intellectual property rights system in India, particularly the patents law, which must be explicitly recognised. Exclusions from patentability would be confined simply to animals and animal varieties and plant and plant varieties. It would be no longer be

possible to limit patentability to process alone; this would statutorily extend to products. The burden of proof would be reversed. Importation would be deemed as the equivalent of working a patent. Compulsory licensing would be possible only under a very restrictive set of conditions, while automatic licences of right would disappear. The period of protection for patents would be extended to twenty years. It need hardly be stressed that the extent of these changes would necessitate amendments across-the-board in the Patents Act.

The implications of this proposed regime, for the absorption, diffusion and adaptation of technologies, let alone innovation, in developing countries, are far-reaching. Much needed technologies may no longer be available at affordable costs. The emergence of domestic technological capacities may be pre-empted. Transfer of technology may slow down. The incidence of restrictive business practices by transnational corporations may increase. The prices of some patented products may rise beyond the reach of the majority of people. These are just some of the important implications and consequences, which suggest that the emerging international system for the protection of intellectual property rights is bound to be inequitable and inimical from the perspective of developing countries.

The proposed regime for trade in agriculture, outlined in the Dunkel text, should also be a cause for concern to us in India. This is so for three reasons.

First, the stipulations about *market access*, which will obviously impose binding constraints on trade policy, are worrisome. For one, market access can be restricted only for balance of payments considerations and not for protection to domestic agriculture; what is more, such restrictions on imports must be price-based alone, so that quantitative limits on, or canalisation of, imports, whether cereals or edible oils, would no longer be possible. For another, we would have to provide a minimum commitment on market access, which would be determined by our actual imports of particular agricultural products, say wheat, during a specified period in the 1980s. In the sphere of export promotion, also, it would no longer be possible to reimburse losses on, or canalise exports from, the agricultural sector, as we have done with sugar and wheat from time to time in the past.

Second, the limits on *domestic support* for agriculture, that can be provided by the government, will clearly circumscribe our freedom. While there is provision for a food security system, our public stock of foodgrains would be deemed as too large and our procurement system would become the subject of GATT discipline. There would be an absolute limit of 10 per cent of the value of production, for each crop, beyond which domestic support would not be permissible.

Third, it is clearly specified that *subsidies* on inputs for the agricultural sector, whether on fertilisers, irrigation, power or credit, can only be made available for low-income farmers. Thus, the present

regimes of explicit or implicit subsidies, which do not differentiate between farmers by size of holding, would be open to question. The practice of public utilities charging concessional prices from the agricultural sector, followed by several State Governments in India, would no longer be tenable.

#### WHAT NEXT?

The draft Final Act in the Dunkel text is characterised by a take-it-or-leave-it syndrome that is implicit in its composite structure and discernible between the lines. It cannot and should not be accepted as *fait accompli*. As a sovereign nation state, which is one of the original contracting parties in the GATT, we must endeavour to re-open the negotiations on a few matters that are of strategic concern to us. The perception that we are in a small minority, or even alone, at the present juncture, should not lead us to abandon the negotiations and sign on the dotted line. It is this 'isolation paradox' which has, perhaps, coaxed many reluctant developing countries into a posture of acceptance. The pursuit of national interest is worthwhile so long as there is any room for manoeuvre, however limited it may be. At this stage, in terms of strategy and tactics, I would suggest three alternative approaches in descending order of preference.

As a first option, we should insist on a formal separation of the agreements on trade in goods, trade in services and trade-related intellectual property rights, which appear as separate annexes in the Dunkel text. We should seek a deletion of the linkages between the different agreements through integrated dispute settlement mechanisms which allow for retaliation across sectors. This would be consistent with our stance so far on the issue of lodgement and the problem of cross-retaliation. At the same time, we should retain the freedom to choose between agreements that are acceptable and those that are not.

The next option, if the agreements cannot be separated, is to consider acceptance of the Dunkel text, but on a strict understanding of 'best endeavour', so that legislative changes would be made if and only if approved by Parliament which must remain sovereign. Pending that, the extant rights under the GATT must remain unimpaired. This stand should not sound unrealistic because the United States also may agree only to a 'best-endeavour' approach when it comes to the removal of Super 301 from their statute book, once the new dispute settlement procedures are in place.

In conclusion, it would not be our of place to mention an option that may be a last resort. It has always been my judgment that, from the perspective of developing countries, multilateralism is superior to bilateralism or plurilateralism. The reason is simple. In a world of unequal partners, a multilateral trading system should provide some

protection to the weak whereas bilateral trade relations would favour the strong. Yet, the asymmetries and the inequalities implicit in the Dunkel text leave this basic proposition open to question; and our faith in multilateralism may turn out to be naïve. The interests of the industrialised countries are the focus of attention, while the interests of the developing countries are the object of neglect. The benefits for us are negligible. The costs may be substantial. The time has perhaps come for the government to evaluate with utmost care the cost and benefits of an unequal international trading system, which bestows few rights and imposes many obligations on the developing countries. It is not obvious that we would be worse-off without it.

## *The Getting of Wisdom*

Vinod Thomas, Ajay Chibber, Mansoor Dailami and Jaime de Melo (eds.) *Restructuring Economies in Distress : Policy Reform and the World Bank*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, Washington, D.C., 1991, pp xiv, 566.

In any country in the world, a bureaucracy with power over people's lives but no accountability to the people constitutes a threat not only to democracy and to the preservation of social and economic rights of the masses, but also to the pursuit of economic efficiency. This is even more true of what has emerged as the world's economic 'super-bureaucracy'—the staff of the IMF and the World Bank, who exercise an inordinate degree of power over millions of people spread over four continents. It is true also that bureaucrats are usually servants of powerful masters who determine the nature of their policies, typically the ruling elites in the society. In the case of the IMF and the World Bank, the rulers can be said to be the leaders of the G7 group of rich industrialised countries, who effectively determine the set of policies that are most regularly imposed on poor or developing countries desirous of obtaining finance from these institutions. These economic bureaucrats are ultimately answerable (implicitly) only to these rulers; otherwise their actions are characterised by a breathtaking lack of accountability which enables them to move blithely from country to country wreaking economic disaster without any concern whatsoever that these actions will have any effect on their own lives. Their policy advice, which usually has some veneer of 'objectivity' as well as a patronising approach which assumes that they know better than any local opinion, unfortunately has so much power because it comes in the form of 'conditionalities' which are tied to the availability of much-needed financial assistance to developing countries, in a context in which other forms of finance are increasingly difficult to come by.

The conditionalities of such financial assistance in virtually all cases have so much consistency as to be known internationally as a 'package', which contains the by-now familiar elements of reduction of budget deficits, devaluation of the exchange rate and trade

liberalisation, elimination of subsidies, freeing of prices, financial liberalisation and hiking of interest rates, closure or privatisation of public sector enterprises, etc. In the past decade, the World Bank has moved increasingly towards lending for structural adjustment programmes from the project lending it had earlier focussed on, and as a consequence its conditionalities have become virtually inseparable from those of the IMF. The conditions imposed stem from a basic free-market ideology which assumes that unhindered markets are in all cases superior to any form of state intervention except for a few infra-structural and social sectors, and that the withdrawal of the state from economic activity is necessarily positive. This approach is characterised not only by a high degree of dogma, but also by a fundamental ahistoricity which denies the obvious facts that the functioning of markets in a particular economy is as historically, socially and politically embedded as the functioning of the government, and neither can be separated from the operation of class forces.

The World Bank indulges in periodic reviews of its own activities, and the volume under consideration is the product of one such review of its success in structural adjustment lending. Inadvertently, and reading between the lines, the contributions to this volume provide as stringent a critique of World Bank policies as anything penned by fierce opponents. To that extent this volume is valuable, because votaries of these policies themselves admit of many of the pitfalls and negative repercussions that are likely to occur. It is also frightening, because despite the implicit acceptance of failure in most cases, in terms of worsening economic conditions and material welfare of the people, the World Bank and the IMF continue to push these policies through in developing countries. The latest and most obvious example is India.

'Structural adjustment' and 'restructuring' are current catchwords whose definitions are far from being universally agreed upon. Some use the term to refer to balance of payments adjustment to get rid of chronic deficits, while others speak of making the economy and productive structure more 'flexible' in terms of responding to changes in the international situation. Essentially this seems to refer to the process of laying the basis for sustained growth in the economy, an aim no one can argue with although the means to achieve it can be questioned. In any case, structural adjustment must be distinguished from short-run stabilisation, which refers to a response to shocks, both internal and external, and usually implies some form of demand management. These can both be necessary concerns of economic policy makers—unfortunately, the free market theology has tended to identify both with economic liberalisation, for which there is no theoretical or empirical justification. A related problem in international balance of payments adjustment is that the burden of adjustment is usually thrown completely on the deficit countries: multilateral institutions have neither the will nor the power to enforce any conditions on surplus

countries. This makes the process of rectification of imbalances not only one-sided but doubly difficult for deficit developing countries.

The World Bank began structural adjustment lending in the early 1980s, and since then SALs (structural adjustment loans, extending to the whole economy) and SECALs (sectoral adjustment loans, referring to a particular sector such as agriculture or energy) have been extended to more than 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This volume covers the experience of most of them, aggregatively in the policy chapters, while nine case studies are singled out for detailed discussion.

The first thing that strikes the observer is the sheer spread of policies that are covered in the conditions for such loans, and the level of details specified. The conditions range from actual fiscal targets to specified values and quantities for taxation and other fiscal devices, exact changes in exchange rates, tariffs and other trade measures, nature of financial sector reform including the timing, the extent of required increase in public enterprise output prices and which enterprises should be sold or closed, the pattern of agricultural pricing and desired movement in intersectoral terms of trade, etc. This amounts to the takeover of virtually the entire economic policy making of a country, by a handful of external bureaucrats whose familiarity with the context is at best sketchy. The extent of control exercised by these outsiders is even more disturbing when one considers that these 'experts' do not spend longer than a few years being concerned with any one country, so that very often they may not even be aware of the numerous problems caused by the policies they have forced through in individual countries. Also, the arrogant idea that a few foreign experts are likely to know better what is good for the country than the representatives of democratically elected governments or any other groups in the society, cannot be refuted when the experts concerned are no longer around to face the music domestically.

This being the case, the casual way in which past mistakes are admitted in this volume is disturbing, especially when there is no evidence that current and fresh loans are being granted with any greater degree of sensitivity or concern for the welfare of the citizens of the recipient country. Thus, in the Preface, the Vice-President of the Bank admits that there has been inadequate recognition of the specific country contexts of the reforms, and of the institutional elements of adjustment—yet World Bank motivated policies continue to be generally the same for all cases and continue to ignore the institutional and class backgrounds within which 'reforms' occur.

The mood of sudden discovery of facts which have been well known to most economists and others in developing countries for a very long time pervades the chapters on specific policies. Thus, in the discussion on public finance, the basic tenets of IMF-World Bank adjustment strategies have been those of reduction of the fiscal deficit through



large expenditure cuts usually in subsidies and in loans to public enterprises. The analysis now admits that this reduction of deficits through sweeping expenditure cuts rather than raising resources through taxes may have been counter-productive, especially when capital investment and infrastructural expenditure are cut, thus affecting future growth prospects. It is pointed out that the basic need is to increase savings and investment in the economy, rather than simply cutting the fiscal deficit—this is something which has been completely ignored in SAL programmes beyond simply 'leaving it to the market' in the hope that private enterprise will respond to more liberalisation. Similarly, it is admitted that there have been no ideas about price policy and control of inflation beyond cutting the state deficit, which is an inadequate measure for the task in most cases. Also, the question of who gains and who loses from particular fiscal policies has been largely ignored in the design of fiscal strategy, which essentially implies that the rich have been enriched and the poor immiserised. In all, this amounts to a formidable indictment of the way fiscal strategy has been formulated in World Bank-financed adjustment programmes, which is also the very same way in which it is currently being designed in our own country.

This is confirmed by the review of macro-economic performance which points out that in most of the countries undergoing SAL programmes, fiscal and inflation indicators deteriorated and growth rates of income fell compared to the past. In some cases the balance of payments improved, but this evidence is not conclusive. While some degree of macro-economic hardship was anticipated, the review expresses surprise at the sheer length of time taken for the turnaround to occur—it was always longer than anticipated, and in most cases has still not occurred, despite nearly 80 per cent compliance with the conditionalities resulting in dramatic falls in income and growth prospects.

One of the major areas of emphasis in such adjustment packages is trade policy reform—in essence, the liberalisation of imports and devaluation of the exchange rate which is supposed to remove the 'anti-export bias' in the economy. The review of trade policy suggests that overall, implementation of such reforms has been 'moderately successful', but there is less discussion on the actual effects of such policies on growth and the balance of payments. It is found that to some extent manufactured exports have improved in particular cases, and not surprisingly, in all cases imports have increased, relative to non-recipients of such loans. Balance of payments and external debt indicators, by contrast, have not shown any general improvement consequent on these policies. The inability to deal with external debt is blamed on fiscal indiscipline, while the failure to improve the balance of payments is attributed to 'terms of trade losses'. The last explanation is highly disingenuous, as adverse terms of trade

movements for exporters of primary products and basic low grade manufactured goods is inevitable if many such exporting countries simultaneously attempt to devalue and increase their export volumes. In the external side, therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn is that this package would lead to increased import values and greater export volumes, but would not necessarily rectify either the balance of payments deficit or the external debt problem.

Financial reforms, which usually involve the privatisation of state financial institutions, freeing (hiking) of interest rates and deregulation of such financial activity, also form part of this package. The review admits that such reforms have been limited in nature and not very successful in effect. This is mainly because such reforms require a sound and stable macro framework in which internal and external deficits have first been dealt with. (Our own government, which seems to be in haste to implement major financial reforms, would do well to bear this in mind.) It is also pointed out that liberalisation of the financial sector places heavier demands on prudential regulation and supervision than does a directed credit system, and that mechanisms for such regulation should be very firmly established before such reforms are fully implemented if they are not to result in financial crashes and chaos.

As far as the agricultural sector is concerned, the thrust of World Bank policy advice hitherto has been on 'getting prices right'. By this is meant usually exchange rate devaluation which would provide an incentive to agricultural exports, and removal of food and agricultural input subsidies so as to leave input and output prices determined by market forces. It was argued that this would make farming more profitable and thus naturally lead to agricultural growth without any further state intervention. In the new mood of questioning, however, the present review admits what agricultural economists in developing countries have been arguing for a long time—that price factors by themselves are insufficient, take a long time, and may lead to perverse consequences. A much greater rôle is played by non-price factors like infrastructure development and investment in irrigation. This is admitted by the review, which therefore chooses to call non-price factors 'complementary' to price initiatives. Unfortunately, the review also admits that while maintaining public and private investment in agriculture is crucial, it is precisely these that suffer during the adjustment period because attempts to maintain fiscal austerity lead to falls in public investment expenditure, while cuts in input subsidies affect real private investment. Typically, therefore, if agriculture performs well over the adjustment then it does so in spite of the policies of the government. In most cases empirically considered in the review, the performance of agriculture did not improve.

Most SAL programmes, the review confesses, focus on trade. Manufacturing industry has been given very little specific attention,

even though this is the sector typically most affected by the adjustment programmes. The chapter on industry confirms that 'it has been difficult for policy makers to insulate industrial producers' from the negative effects of SAL programmes, by which is meant that in general industrial production has stagnated or slumped. Indeed, the result in many cases has been a process of de-industrialisation.

Within industry, the Bank (and Fund) tend to concentrate on public enterprises as the perpetrators of much economic evil and the units most in need of reform. The main concentration of reform has been on divestiture (or privatisation) of public enterprises, shedding of labour and closure of loss-making units. Once again, the review sounds a note of caution, pointing out that divesting public monopolies into uncompetitive markets may do more harm than good, and is able to provide very little information on the post-privatisation performance of divested units. What is most remarkable is the concept of success in this regard. The main 'achievements' of the SAL programmes are listed as follows: (page 124)

- \* A freeze on new hiring in public enterprises and, in several cases, a reduction in the number of employees, sometimes a substantial one.

- \* A freeze on the creation of public enterprises and, in many instances, a reduction in their number through divestiture and amalgamation into the regular line administrations

- \* A general but not universal reduction in the budgetary burden of public enterprises (*mainly through price increases, investment cuts, and staff layoffs*) (Emphasis added).

Thus, reductions in employment and investment in public sector units as well as higher prices, even for necessary public utilities, are seen as 'steps forward' in the adjustment programmes!

One of the reviews most damaging to the SAL philosophy is that of the social costs of adjustment. It points out that in all cases, insufficient attention has been paid to this aspect, which has led to fairly severe burdens particularly on the working classes and disadvantaged sections of society. This is important because in all cases, adjustment programmes have taken longer to implement and have proved far more arduous for the citizens than originally expected. Overall, per capita calorie intake was found to decline during the adjustment period, even though there was some slight improvement in other indicators like infant mortality rate and life expectancy. A number of features of SAL programmes are noted to have adverse effects on the extent and distribution of social welfare: currency devaluation which raises prices and export promotion which reduces domestic availability, the liberalisation of prices and lifting of subsidies, falls in public sector employment and salaries, cuts in public social services and increases in cost recovery measures. Furthermore, targeted social expenditures to protect and assist the poor have been almost non-existent in SAL

programmes. In this context it should be noted that casual attempts to incorporate some expenditures on so-called 'safety nets' for the new and old poor are also misconceived, since they ignore the basic premise that such expenditures are not just 'welfare measures' but are actually crucial investments in social and human infrastructure which are fundamental to any strategy of medium or long term growth. Thus, the neglect of such expenditures is a major failure, because it means not just a deterioration in conditions of the poor, but also an inability to develop human resources which are necessary for growth. With such neglect, any programme of restructuring for sustained growth must ultimately fail.

The conclusions from the aggregative reviews of sets of policies are confirmed by the nine individual case studies of countries that have undergone several SAL programmes over the eighties. Of these, six are admitted to be failures or cases of 'incomplete adjustment'—the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Zambia, Pakistan, Chile and Mexico. (The period covered is 1981–88.) In most cases, the blame for failure or incompleteness is laid upon the absence of internal local consensus for the programme, inadequate external financing to sustain it, lack of sound policies over the long term, and too slow a speed of the expected supply response. It should be clear from the earlier discussion, however, that the very design of the policies themselves is to a large extent responsible for their failure.

Only three countries included in the case studies are classified as 'successes'—Turkey, Indonesia and South Korea. However, the very limited nature of such success is evident from the detailed discussion. In Turkey, the first five years of the SAL programmes were characterised by high exports and economic growth. But this was largely due to fiscal expansion and contained seeds of the subsequent problems. By the late 1980s, the public sector deficit was large and growing, inflation was high and accelerating, the external and domestic debt burden was mounting rapidly and investment in key sectors was stagnating. (The perverse and unsustainable nature of the earlier 'success' has been well described by Boratav's paper in this issue.) The earlier growth was clearly not a tribute to the efficacy of the SALs but a simple result of certain expansionary fiscal policies. In Indonesia, the balance of payments showed a marked improvement over the SAL period. However, at the same time, overall growth of income underwent a decline, public investment fell sharply, both public and private consumption registered decreases and per capita income fell in real terms. The increase in exports was accompanied by a terms of trade loss which resulted in a decline in per capita incomes. Furthermore, unemployment increased and the wage share of national income declined substantially. It is difficult to see how such a performance can be characterised as a success. The South Korean case is much more indicative of actual success in terms of renewed growth rates and

income. However, as Westphal points out in his comment, Korea's rapid recovery from macro-economic crisis owed far more to stabilization policies than to concurrent adjustment policies. Also, the turnabout was based on the supply responsiveness of the Korean private sector which was essentially due to the earlier pattern of growth. It should be pointed out that this pattern of growth was predicated upon strong state intervention and public targeting of exports and high growth sectors, rather than a simple free market ideology.

It should be evident that the analyses in this volume amount to a very considerable condemnation of the way in which loan conditionalities have operated in the past decade. The question must obviously be asked: if the minimum degree of introspection and empirical consideration of results produces such a devastating critique, however, unintentioned, then why does the World Bank persist in peddling the same set of policies even now? That it does so is clear, not only in India, but also in Eastern Europe where the same unpleasant medicine is being administered even though the resulting costs are likely to be even more damaging.

The answer can be had from turning to a consideration not of the World Bank bureaucrats themselves but of their masters: the group of rich industrialised countries who are keen on enforcing and perpetuating their economic dominance in the world. Their continued access to and control over the major share of the world's resources depends on the economic subservience of the vast majority of the world's population spread across many developing and least developed countries, and the set of policies described above are designed to perpetuate this subservience. Economic strategies which effectively de-industrialise large parts of the South even while they operate to increase the supply and reduce the prices of most of the South's exports, obviously operate to the North's advantage. This requirement of North dominated international trade is accompanied by the designs of international private investment, which seeks to exploit developing countries for markets and fields of investment which are increasingly denied to them in the OECD countries because of health and environmental hazards. Bureaucrats within the World Bank are not unaware of these requirements. Thus the Chief Economist of the World Bank (Lawrence Summers) in a recent memo, argued that the Bank should be encouraging the movement of 'dirty' (i.e. polluting and environment-degrading) industries to the developing world as a systematic part of its strategy. All this makes it clear that the imposition of typical World Bank-IMF conditions must be seen as part of the same strategy on the part of the rich nations as that currently underway in GATT and other multilateral institutions, to force developing countries to accept a world order that is fundamentally unequal and will become more unequal as these conditions are accepted.

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA

---

---

## SUBSCRIBE TO *Social Scientist*

Please note the changes in subscription rates, which will come into effect with issue no. 221.

You may send the subscription by cheque/draft/money order\*, payable to *Social Scientist*, along with the following details:

Name (in block letters): .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

*Postal address:*

SOCIAL SCIENTIST  
C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016  
Phone: 686 2924

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES (inclusive of postage)\*

Single issue	Rs	15
Double issue	Rs	20
Annual subscription (individuals)	Rs	150
Annual subscription (institutions & libraries)	Rs	200
Annual subscription (students)	Rs	100
Subscription for two years (individuals)	Rs	225
Subscription for three years (individuals)	Rs	300

*Foreign (in US dollars)*

Air mail	\$	60
Sea mail	\$	50

\* Rs 10 extra for outstation cheques.

---

---

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

Tenancy Reform Act in Bihar during the First Congress Government: 1937-39	Radhakanta Barik	3
The Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement—1933-1939	Lata Singh	21
The Moral Woman and the Urban Punjabi Society of the Late Nineteenth Century	Anshu Malhotra	34
Of Movements, Compromises and Retreats: Orissa, 1936-1939	Biswamoy Pati	64
REVIEW ARTICLE	Crisis of Governability? Neera Chandhoke	89
BOOK REVIEWS		98



# **SOCIAL SCIENTIST**

VOLUME 20

NUMBERS 5-6

MAY-JUNE 1992

## **ADVISORY EDITORS**

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekedath  
Jacob Eapen

## **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## **CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT**

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

### **Inland**

Single issue	Rs. 15
Double issue	Rs. 20
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 150
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 200
Annual (students)	Rs. 100
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 225
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 300

(Rs. 10 extra if by outstation cheque)

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

Rajendra Prasad

## **EDITOR**

Prabhat Patnaik

## **EDITORIAL OFFICE**

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## **Foreign (In US Dollars)**

Annual:	
Air mail	60
Sea mail	50

ISSN 0970 - 0293

The grant for publication from Indian Council of Historical Research is gratefully acknowledged.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial

Themes like peasant politics and gender in colonial India have attracted the attention of various scholars. We have also tried to focus on these issues in the *Social Scientist* in order to generate debates and encourage contributions related to their manifestations in the different regions of India.

The current number has four essays. Biswamoy Pati, Lata Singh and Radhakanta Barik examine aspects of peasant politics in Orissa and Bihar in the 1930s. Pati explores the various interactions which precipitated the birth of the Kisan Sangha in Orissa, the 1937 election and the installation of the first popular ministry. This process coincided with a major anti-colonial/feudal movement. He shows the shifts and changes after the election, with the Congress toning down its anti-feudal position and becoming more accommodating to the landlords. He emphasises how this had some effect on the peasant movement—though the process was not marked by a clear uniformity.

Lata Singh's article focuses on the Bihar Kisan Sabha. She delineates the process through which the Kisan Sabha created a rural base for the Congress and contributed significantly to the latter's electoral victory in 1937. Singh locates the basic structure of peasant politics which was dominated by an effort to arrest the erosion of customary rights, and associates the post-1936 militancy with the struggles over the *bakasht* lands. Although the abolition of landlordism emerged as a component of peasant politics, she emphasises how it failed to become an integral part of peasant consciousness. Nevertheless, as pointed out, these struggles undermined the hegemony of the zamindars and altered the basis of their exploitation.

Radhakanta Barik's is a companion piece, also on Bihar, examining the Tenancy Reform Acts under the first Congress government. Barik shows how the government made considerable changes in the Act introduced in 1937 under pressure from the landlords, so that while the legislation introduced had been a radical one, what was actually passed evoked grateful thanks from landlords' leaders. The paper highlights the eagerness of the Congress government not to antagonise either of the contending class, the landlords and the tenants, and to

obtain the support of both while staving off 'unmanageable' peasant militancy.

Anshu Malhotra takes up Dayanand Saraswati's *Satyartha Prakash* to explore the construction of the 'new traditional-moral' woman—the 'Mother India'—in the 1890s. Focusing on Punjabi society she delineates how this reinforced patriarchal control, though at the same time offering a limited space for women's education, their politicisation and an improvement of the condition of widows. The Arya Samaj movement drew upon this imagery. Moreover, this role model served as a counter to the 'western woman', and became a symbol of a community and the 'nation'.

RADHAKANTA BARIK\*

### *Tenancy Reforms Act in Bihar during the First Congress Government: 1937-39*

The colonial State brought rural Bihar under the laws of Permanent Settlement to the benefit of the zamindars. The basic aim of the law was the collection of maximum revenue without any investment in the agriculture sector. It never succeeded to bring social peace in rural society. On the contrary, the rural society was ridden with the tensions and turmoil which had roots in its agrarian structure. The colonial Government had brought a measure, the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, which intended to bring a balance between the zamindars and the tenants. It aimed at giving occupancy right to a section of the peasants which became the leading strata of the peasant movements in the 1930s. At the same time, the Act of 1885 gave a tremendous power to the zamindars to increase the rent without any proportionate increase in the revenue. Moreover, the transfer fee on the sale of land helped the landlords to get a good amount out of the brisk trade in land. The rental amount and the transfer fee became the bone of contention between the zamindars and the tenants. Moreover, the Act of 1885 needed an overhauling to satisfy the needs of the peasants. Kisan movements on these issues became strong enough to pressurise the Congress Government in 1937 to bring forth a radical Tenancy Reforms Act. The Act showed a danger signal to the zamindar class which united under the banner of the Bihar Landholders Association (BLHA). The BLHA succeeded to pressurise the Congress Government to the extent that the proposed Act was changed to satisfy the interests of the zamindars. In this paper the study is confined to analyse the nature of agrarian legislations which had a dampening impact on conflicts in rural Bihar.

#### KISAN SABHA'S VIEWPOINT

The Bihar Provincial Kissan Sabha (BPKS) was in the forefront of the struggles which demanded a new Tenancy Act. At the time of the provincial elections to the State Assembly in 1936 the BPKS took up this issue as a major plank of the election propaganda. The Congress

---

\* Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

party supported the demands of the Kisan Sabha and got an absolute majority in the Assembly. Hopes of kisans were raised with the assumption of power by the party.

The BKPS brought out an election manifesto besides the Congress manifesto. It recognised the Congress party as the main spokesman of the masses. The 'Congress is the only political organization that can speak in the name of the Indian masses'.<sup>1</sup> They pleaded with the Congress party to keep agrarian reform as the core of the Programme'. They further emphasised that 'if Congress wishes to serve at the same time the interests of other classes, it may do so, but it may never do this at the cost of the interests of the starving millions of the peasantry'.<sup>2</sup> The BKPS wanted a moderate agrarian programme to be implemented by the Congress Government. 'Pasants must get all that is possible within the framework of the present economic and political regime and on the other hand they must prepare for the removal of the basic obstacles in their path and for the realization of their fullest well-being'.<sup>3</sup> The BPKS recognised that the balance of forces was not in favour of the kisans. Their understanding of the agrarian situation was this: 'the misery of the Indian peasantry is due not so much to seasonal or local or petty causes but fundamentally to the nature of land tenure and revenue and credit system and the merciless exploitation of imperialism'.<sup>4</sup> Tenancy reform was kept as the mainstay of the minimum agrarian programmes, which is as follows:

- (1) Conferment on tenants of fixity of tenure (right to free transfer of holdings and unrestricted use of their land and its products. Abolition of salemi).
- (2) Abolition of all systems of rent in kind.
- (3) Exemption of all uneconomic holdings from rent and taxes.
- (4) Immunity from arrest, imprisonment, as well as attachment or sale of all holdings, homestead, dairy or other cattle, homestead necessities, stables, in execution of civil decrees and rent demands.
- (5) No certificate powers to landlords.
- (6) Stiffening of provisions of the Tenancy Act regarding rent receipts and of the Private Irrigation Act to prevent landlords, as also of the sections concerning illegal executions, begari etc.
- (7) Cancellation of arrears and enhancement of rents and canal rates generally at a maximum of 50 per cent and stopping of further enhancement of rent and canal rates.
- (8) Enactment of legislation cancelling all such previous debts as the peasants were unable to pay without hardship, fixing rate of interest.
- (9) Provision by legislation of free common pastures in any village and for free utilisation by peasants of forest products such as

timber, fuel, bamboo, etc., for their domestic and agricultural use.

The BPKS combined the demands related to peasant economy with the ecological demands. The programme aimed at the weakening of the zamindar's hold over the peasant society without which prosperity was impossible. Freedom of the peasant was a must before any economic growth. Illegal exaction, arrears of rent and transfer fees were the three crucial demands of the BPKS. Cancellation of debt was not given so much priority by the Kisan Sabha because many of the rich peasants were moneylenders.

The Congress party at the provincial level as well as at the national level was committed to a minimum agrarian programme. The provincial leaders recognised the absolute tenurial system which remained the main obstacle to agricultural development. They expressed their commitment to the demands of the peasants through the election manifesto which said, 'Poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry is fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system'.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the Congress party made a commitment to rent reduction, debt cancellation, prohibition of *abwab* and cancellation of arrears. Once the Congress party assumed power, they were supposed to implement the mandate.

Assuming power, the Congress Government made an honest effort at implementing an agrarian programme. They recognised the limitation and spirit of the 1885 Bengal Tenancy Act. They brought forth an amendment to the Act to cope with the problem of peasants.

The Congress Government introduced two Bills at a time: Tenancy Reforms (Amendment) Act and the Agricultural Income Tax Bill, though the Agricultural Income Tax Bill had no links with the agrarian programmes put forth by the BPKS. Moreover, it did not face so much opposition in the Assembly. The basic objective of the law was to pressurise the zamindars to come to an agreement with the Government. The leaders of the BLHA made a protest against the Agricultural Income Tax Bill. Jalil, an M.L.A. from zamindar constituency noted that 'Zamindars of the Province assembled together in a compact mass. . .without any distinction in a common platform. They opposed the imposition of Agricultural Income Tax Bill'.<sup>6</sup> As a representative of the zamindar class, Sir C.P.N. Singh, characterised the Bill as a dangerous move to finish the class. His observation was blunt. 'There are cries of killing the vary zamindars and removing the thorn from their sides. It is not desirable to allow the process of killing by bits. Sometimes, you cut the hand, sometimes the leg and so on'.<sup>7</sup> Without any consultation with the zamindars, the Congress Government was bringing the bill, which was the root of all the controversy. S.A. Manzoor, a zamindar M.L.A. said that the bringing

of the Bill would destroy the joint family system.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, S.A. Aziz branded the bill as 'illegal, inequitable, imprudent'.<sup>9</sup> The Hindu and Muslim zamindars combined together, on the floor of the assembly in protesting against the Bill.

Passing of the Agriculture Income Tax Bill was the test of the political will of the government. S.K. Singh, the Prime Minister observed that 'the principle of taxation is coexistent with the theory of State. The theory of progressive taxation is at present accepted where the proportion of direct tax would be more than indirect tax'.<sup>10</sup>

The Agricultural Income Tax Bill was passed in the month of September 1937. Zamindars suffered a marginal financial loss. By making the Bill into a law, the Congress Government wanted to test the strength of the zamindar class in Bihar. They realised the strength of a class which compelled them to bring other laws in consultation with the zamindars.

#### TENANCY REFORMS ACT

Amendment to the B.T. Act of 1885 was the core of the Congress programme. It aimed at changing the relations between zamindars and tenants. The underlying philosophy of the Tenancy Reforms Act derived from the B.T. Act. 'The History of various measures adopted by the British Officers since the inauguration of the Permanent Settlement for the benefit of the tenants showed that these officers were unconcerned with either party and were inspired by the sole motive of doing justice',<sup>11</sup> said S.K. Singh. The Congress Government was concerned to give some relief to peasants. They were not ready to alter the Permanent Settlement. The zamindars were unnecessarily worried about the Tenancy Reforms Bill. S.K. Singh, the Prime Minister, tried to clarify the position of the Government. If small things such as the present measure caused a tempest in tea pot, he did not know what would be the case when he would touch the Permanent Settlement itself.<sup>12</sup> The tenancy reforms act was intended to change the basic philosophy of the Permanent Settlement.

Although, the BPKS raised the issue of tenancy reforms so vacillatingly, it also had a support among the Congress members. Most of the Congress members were peasants. They pressurised the Government to enact a law to take care of these problems. Sixty-one Congress MLAs of the Assembly gave a written representation to the Prime Minister demanding f Tenancy Reforms Act. They wished that the Government should introduce a bill immediately.<sup>13</sup> Their charter of demands was precise and pointed it contained the following points:

1. All the arrears of land rents should be wiped off.
2. The present land rent should be reduced by half.
3. all sorts of enhancements should be annulled.
4. Abolition of salami should be removed.

5. The certificate clause should be repealed from the B.T. Act.
6. All rents in kind should be abolished and, instead of them, rents in cash should be introduced.
7. All auctioned lands of the peasants in the case of arrears of rent should be returned to those kisans from whom the lands had been snatched away.
8. Non-issue of receipts to the peasants on the payment of land rent should be made a cognisable offence.
9. Taking all sorts of begari should be a cognisable offence.
10. Illegal realisation and taxation other than rents prescribed should be a cognisable offence.
11. Interest on arrears of land rent should not exceed 3 per cent per annum.
12. No rent on uneconomic holdings.
13. Fair and equitable rent on the basis of one sixth of the gross produce should be declared.
14. Under-tenant should have a claim over the lands.
15. Right of taking and using wood, bamboo, grass, leaves, fruits, flower, juice, spring and fountains by the pasants in the forest territories of the Santhal Parganas and Chotanagpur division should be acknowledged.
16. Right to withhold payment of land rent by the kisans on the failure of irrigation on the part of the zamindars.
17. 50 per cent reduction in canal rate.
18. Debt Conciliation Bill should be introduced on the basis of the following lines:
  - (a) Rate of interest should be six per cent per annum.
  - (b) Compound interest should be declared illegal.
  - (c) No realisation of debt from those who had paid double amount of the principal.
  - (d) Moratorium should be declared on those Mahajan's loans who had already received the double amount.
  - (e) All the debts should be wiped off in case the peasants are unable to pay.
  - (f) Maximum price of sugarcane recommended by the sub-committee appointed by the BPCC should be fixed.

It is interesting to note that the charter of the demands by the Congress MLAs was well formulated unlike the Kisan Sabha programme. The Congress Government took a note of it and incorporated the points in the proposed Tenancy Act. The Bill, introduced in the Assembly in September 1937, was a reasonably radical one. It intended to change the obnoxious clauses of the B.T. Act. In the Introduction of the Act, it was said that, 'to mitigate the hardships of the tcnantry of the province on account of the operation of



some of the present provisions of the B.T. Act, it is proposed to amend it. . . .'<sup>14</sup>

It was recognised in the proposed Bill that the system of payment in kind operated 'most harshly against the raiyat. It was proposed in clause 6 of the Bill to abolish the payment of tent in kind including the 'bata' (share cropping) system altogether. Moreover, for an interim period, the share could be divided in the ratio of 18 to 22 where a raiyat could get some protection against the landlord.

Although the zamindars did not take a tough stand on the Agricultural Income Tax Bill, they did not agree with any clause of the proposed Tenancy Bill. They recognised the fact that the peasants needed certain reliefs. 'There is little controversy over the point that the tenants do require some measure of relief and that they must be granted that . . . On the other hand, when the Congress Ministry appear inclined to demonstrate that they are prepared to march much ahead of the landlords and to inspire hopes in the kisans that more concessions will come in course of time, they lay themselves open to the charge of trying more to secure a party advantage than to accord impartial treatment of all sections of the community'.<sup>15</sup>

The Tenancy Reforms Bill faced a rough weather in the Assembly. Because of the stiff opposition from the zamindar members, the Bill was sent to the Select Committee. The Select Committee could not meet and discuss the matter. As Prasad observed, 'we had worked for settlement for days, waited for three days for the meeting of the committee and made the select committee of the Assembly to rise without transacting any business on two days'.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the leaders of the Congress recognised the weakness of the committees of the Assembly, the sorry state of affairs explained the strength of the zamindars as a class in Bihar. As regards the Tenancy Reforms Act, the law making body played a very marginal role. The Zamindars succeeded to pressurise the Government. The original bill was kept in cold storage. The Joint Secretary of the BLHA gave the grounds for the opposition to the Bill.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, the proposed Tenancy legislation would bring class war which would result in the creation of a stratum of occupancy tenants who would oppress the labouring community. Secondly, it would destroy the basic structure of the Permanent Settlement. Thirdly, the smaller Zamindars would suffer the most. Fourthly, the Act would cost the Congress Party heavily. The party would lose their financial and moral support. Fifthly, the Act went against the spirit of the 1935 Constitutional Act. The position of the zamindars on the tenancy reforms drew critical remarks from the Governor of Bihar.<sup>18</sup>

The leaders of the BLHA launched a protest movement against the proposed Tenancy Reforms Act. The Raja of Darabhangra, Sir C.P.N. Singh and Sir G.D. Singh characterised the Bill as 'piecemeal legislation' which could not bring any real change in a society.<sup>19</sup> Sir

G.D. Singh, an octogenarian leader, gave a bitter statement that 'if the Government considered the zamindars as a class to be ruinous and obnoxious to themselves, then they should kill the zamindars outright, instead of this slow process of torture. In that case the protracted agony would come to an end.'<sup>20</sup> The zamindars blamed the socialists and the Kisan Sabha for pressurising the Congress Government into bringing forth the Tenancy legislations. 'Tenancy legislation created doubts in their mind. They questioned the Congress ministry's perspective being vitiated by a reddish hue'<sup>21</sup> They added that these Tenancy Acts would aggravate the conflicts in the countryside.

In other words, the leaders of the BLHA were aware of the fact that the Government had been forced to bring forth the Tenancy legislation unavoidably. But they thought that it should come through a dialogue with the BLHA. As the Raja of Darabhanga hoped, 'whatever be the measure . . . the Government would not suffer itself to be guided by passions or prejudices and will look at the problems with an impartial mind.'<sup>22</sup> The zamindars urged the Congress leaders to give a serious thought to the agrarian situation. Moreover, the law making process was a complex issue. The Government should hold discussions and dialogues with the representatives of the BLHA. That would lead to some useful result. In other words, Tenancy legislations should be the product of a Congress-zamindars dialogue. This dialogue was actually held and resulted in a Congress-zamindar agreement.

It is interesting to see how the Tenancy Reforms Act was transformed after the agreement with the zamindars. Each clause of the proposed Act was modified under the pressure of the zamindars. Before the Agreement, the Congress Government proposed to abolish the system of the produce rent. But in the agreement, they accepted that the *Danabandi* system would be abolished. The other systems of produce rent as *Batai* and *Mankshap* would remain. Moreover, the commutation of *Bhowli* into *Nagdi* would be done, if the tenant so desired, not as a general principle.<sup>23</sup>

The Congress Government proposed that clause 7 of the Tenancy Act would empower a Collector to punish a landlord for not granting a proper receipt to the tenant. As regards the illegal exactions, clause 13 of the Bill made it clear that it would be cognisable offence for which a landlord would be punished with imprisonment for six months. The leaders of the BLHA gave it their 'full support'.<sup>24</sup> But the collection of *abwab* should not be made a cognisable offence.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the kisan movement had created a situation in which peasants were not ready to pay any *abwab*. The leaders of the zamindars recognised the dialectics of reality. 'In the days of the Kisan agitations, landlords find it difficult to realise their lawful dues: to talk of illegal impositions was to live in the dreamland'.<sup>26</sup> The Raja of Darabhanga raised a point

that the proposed clause would give a chance to the executive to harass the zamindars. The Kisan Sabha movement would be that collection of rent became an impossible task.<sup>27</sup> But the clause regarding illegal exactions was modified.<sup>28</sup>

Non-payment of rent forced the sale of entire holding of the tenant. This 'has been a constant source of friction between landlord and tenant and has on occasions led to the breach of peace'.<sup>29</sup> This was the language in the proposed B.T. (Ahend) Act. It suggests that the Congress Government recognised the gravity of the situation. It was proposed that in suite for the arrears of rent only a portion of the holding would be sold which would satisfy the decree. Otherwise the entire holding may be made over to the landlord for a period not exceeding seven years and at the end of the period the holding should revert to the raiyat. The zamindars were very much adamant over the issue. This was the greatest tool in their hands to harass tenants, and evicting them from their lands. The zamindars, on the other hand, did not want to lose revenue. They were very obstinate over the issue. In the second BLHA Conference, Shyamanandan Sahay brought a resolution telling that 'the landlords view with grave apprehension and dismay the proposal to give the option to the tenants to surrender their holdings for a limited period of time in satisfaction of the decree for arrears of rent'. He emphasised that 'this is the most objectionable part as it challenges the basic rights of the zamindars over the land'.<sup>30</sup> The zamindars gave a bitter fight over the clause, because they did not want to lose their control over the tenants. They argued the sale of holding would make possible the collection of rent.<sup>31</sup> Sir C.P.N. Singh unfolded the mind of the zamindars that they were ready to support the proposal of rent reduction but not the other one.<sup>32</sup> They could bear the financial loss but not the control over the tenants.

The Congress Government conceded the demand of the zamindars. It was decided in the agreement that the clause on part sale would be dropped. The option of keeping land under the zamindar's control for a period of seven years was also dropped. The clause was modified and the law was made more stringent. That once 'a tenant was declared a 'habitual defaulter' because of the non-payment of rent, his whole holding would be liable for selling'.<sup>33</sup>

#### CANCELLATION OF ARREARS

The Congress Party was committed to the cancellation of arrears of rent which was burden on the peasants. Cancellation of arrears of rent was closely related to the rent reduction. Because of high rents, peasants were unable to pay it. Moreover, the world economic depression affected the agricultural price in a negative manner. They were forced to sell their land in paying rent. Moreover, the Section 40 of the B.T. Act allowed zamindars to increase the rent. It got reflected in the

proposed Tenancy (Amend) Act which stated that it had become difficult for the raiyats to bear the burden of the existing rents. In the Bill, there was a provision that in all such cases and in other similar cases in which the existing rents had been unfair or inequitable, the raiyat could get a fair rent settled for his holding.

The BLHA reacted sharply to the clause of 'fair and equitable' rent. What is fair rent? Is fifty per cent not fair rent?<sup>34</sup> Although they agreed to the principle of rent reduction, their demand was this that their loss of income should be supplemented by the reduction of case.<sup>35</sup> They pleaded that 'the government had not made an attempt to accord any corresponding relief to the landlords who, on account of the provision of the Tenancy Act, would be forced to forego upto 50 per cent of the rent.'<sup>36</sup> In the Congress-Zamindar Agreement, the Congress Government conceded the demand of the zamindars.

On the issue of the arrears of rent, the zamindars were adamant. There was a stalemate over the issue. The dialogue with the Congress Government reached a deadlock. The leaders of the BLHA demanded that no remission would be made unless a tenant paid at least 5 per cent of the arrears of rent. The amount should be paid immediately to the zamindars.<sup>37</sup> They remained obstinate over the demand, which worried Prasad, the main architect of the agreement. 'But I do not think that they should be made a part of the settlement. If the whole thing was published it would look that we had made no arrangement above even partial remission.'<sup>38</sup> The Congress leaders accepted the demands of the zamindars unofficially, without making it a part of the agreement. Rajendra Prasad said, 'on the last date when everything was settled, the whole thing broken down on the insistence to have these conditions relating to the arrears incorporated in the settlement.'<sup>39</sup>

The Congress leaders wanted to have a facesaving solution. But the zamindars were unbending. Arrears of rent became the most controversial issue over which their whole agreement was going to collapse. Prasad stated, 'there is no difference ultimately except on one point. The Congress resolution is explicit that arrears should generally be wiped out. We appealed to them (zamindars) to be generous in this respect so that it might not be said that we acted against the express terms of the Congress resolution. But they were adamant.'<sup>40</sup>

In the end, both the parties agreed that the arrears of rent might be dealt with by the debt conciliation board. The board would consider certain conditions when settling the claims against riyats for arrears of rent: (a) the amount of case and interest thereon paid by a landlord would be refundable to him in proportion to the remission of arrears in his zamindari, (b) after a portion of the arrears was remitted by the conciliation board, the balance should be paid by the raiyat by instalments within a year and a half.<sup>41</sup>

Once the law was made in favour of the zamindars, it was difficult on the part of the administration to implement it. The Board of Revenue was of the opinion that 'rent reduction operation had assumed almost unmanageable proportion. The original estimate of Government was that the operations would be completed by December, 1939, but reports from various sources convinced them that operations would be long and protracted.'<sup>42</sup>

#### TRANSFER FEE

While transferring land, a raiyat was paying a certain amount to the landlord known as transfer fee. The landlord was demanding a transfer fee in the case of selling of land which was known as *salami*. *Salami* was paid to the landlord at the rate of 8 per cent in each sale. It turned out to be quite a substantial amount. Most of the Indian states had abolished the *salami*. In the case of Bengal, the abolition of *salami* was possible before 1937.<sup>43</sup> Maulana Azad, the central emissary of the Congress high command demanded the abolition of *salami* which was not agreed upon by the zamindars.<sup>44</sup> Transfer fee became the second most controversial point over which the zamindars took a very strong stand. Prasad felt very much embarrassed and perplexed over this issue. 'Another controversial point was *salami*—inspite of vehement protest and anticipation of a tearing agitation against the settlement. They had agreed to allow us a compromise—something that would amount to *salami* or four per cent of the consideration money. I would request them to have the matter also reconsidered and to treat the offer of four per cent withdrawn.'<sup>45</sup> There was a tremendous pressure of the Congress people over Prasad who was hesitant over keeping the clause on *salami*. In the end, a compromise was reached where the *salami* changed its name and became the 'consideration money.' In the agreement, it was stated that 'it is proposed to abolish altogether and to give to the tenants full right of sale. In case of sale of entire holding the landlord will have to be paid a nominal fee of two per cent of the rent of the holding.'<sup>46</sup>

#### DISTRAINT CLAUSE AND CERTIFICATE PROCEDURE

The distraint clause of the B.T. Act was hated by the tenants most. It was a tool in the hands of the landlords for the harassment of the raiyats. The Congress Party was committed to the removal of distraint clause. After forming the government, there was an overall consensus among the Congress members for abolition of the certificate procedure. Narainji, the advisor to Prasad on kisan problems, emphasised the point the abolition of distraint clause was a must; otherwise there would be a great deal of disenchantment among people.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in the agreement with the zamindars, it had been decided that the certificate procedure would be abolished but the procedure relating to

suits for arrears of rent and execution of rent decreased had been made simplified in helping the landlord. Prasad wanted a compromise to be made with the zamindars.<sup>48</sup> He did not support the total abolition of the distraint clause. He wanted a modification of the clause for satisfying the zamindars. 'Their right to realise rent by sale of entire holding, by attachment of moveable properties and imprisonment were taken away—but it was not suggested at that time the right to distraint crop should be also taken away', said Prasad.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, the Congress leaders under the guidance of Prasad made the law more complex. In the agreement with the zamindars, it was decided that once the order of distraint had been passed by the civil court, it would be transferred to the Revenue Court. Secondly, if a raiyat had defaulted in the payment of rent for a period of four consecutive years, the raiyat would be declared a 'habitual defaulter' by the court and his whole property would be attached.<sup>50</sup>

Once both the parties agreed upon and settled the matter, the zamindars started playing tricks by issuing a wrong press statement over the distraint clause; which indicated that the 'distraint clause' would be properly modified to the satisfaction of zamindars. This statement created a hue and cry in the Congress circle.<sup>51</sup> Azad, Prasad and Narainji launched a strong protest against it. On behalf of the Congress Party, Narainji gave a press statement in the *Searchlight* in clarifying their position.<sup>52</sup> Most of the Congress members were not happy with the Congress leaders and the way they handled the distraint clause. Retaining the clause in any form would affect their position in rural politics. Although, most of the Congress members disapproved the actions of the zamindars, they were very unhappy over the distraint clause.

To satisfy the zamindars, the Congress Government changed the clause in the Tenancy Act. These changes were not apart of the written agreement. Narainji wrote to Prasad, 'the distraint clause which was in a different form in the agreement had changed in the legislation.'<sup>53</sup> The law was so complicated that a landlord with one anna share could file a suit for distraint against a raiyat. This would enable the smallest zamindar to trouble a tenant. Moreover, an anonymous Congressman wrote a letter to Prasad that 'the distraint clause will embitter the relationship between pasants and zamindars if it is executed, either they will get angry or they will be scared of the zamindar. In both ways, the situation will be bad.'<sup>54</sup> Representatives of the Kisan Sabha in the Assembly expressed their anguished feelings. Jamuna Kharjee, M.L.A. wanted an amendment to clause 54 which dealt with a habitual defaulter.<sup>55</sup> He raised an important point that there had been a provision regarding habitual defaulter but there was no provision for the zamindar who did not pay rent receipt. In a comparative analysis, he showed that the Tenancy Act would favour more the zamindars than the tenants. It was even admitted by

the leaders of the BLHA that 'the only concession zamindars had gained is that the rent realisation procedure has been placed on satisfactory footing.'<sup>56</sup>

#### BAKASTHA ACT

Politics of 1930s in Bihar centred around the Bakastha issue. This was the most crucial issue which needed an immediate attention of the Congress Government. At the time of formulating the Tenancy Reforms Act they could not handle the Bakastha problem. Theoretically, the Congress leaders did not agree that the return of the Bakastha land would be possible. Rajendra Prasad was of opinion that Bakastha land had been in possession of the landlord for generations or had been acquired or purchased by him from another tenant. No tenant had ever had anything to do with it.<sup>57</sup> Prasad, as a legal luminary, could perceive the problem from a legal angle. This was also the perception of an average Congress leader. S.K. Singh, the Prime Minister of Bihar, had a different understanding of the problem. He was of the opinion that the Bakastha land would be resettled with the tenants without any occupancy right.<sup>58</sup> Azad, as an emissary of the Central High Command could realise that the Congress Government would have to tackle the problem in the coming agrarian legislation.<sup>59</sup>

Popular movements on the Bakastha issue were strong enough to pressurise the Congress Government to tackle the problem. For having a satisfactory answer to the problem, the Congress Party was forced to come to an agreement with the zamindars. As Prasad said, 'Restoration of Bakastha land was one of the principal considerations which induced us to accept the agreement and if that is given the go bye, I do not know where we shall stand.'<sup>60</sup> He was trying to persuade the leaders of the BLHA to come to an agreement on the Bakastha issue. For handling the issue, a separate legislation was necessary. The Restoration of Bakastha Land Bill of 1938 was an important Bill which needed a serious discussion. The whole issue was discussed between the zamindars and Congress leaders and it was agreed that Bakastha land which had fallen so during the period of 1929 to 1936 should be restored to the tenants but on certain conditions to be satisfied.<sup>61</sup> First, the tenant had to pay the decree amount on the instalment basis or in one lumpsum. Secondly, failure to pay instalments for two consecutive years would entitle the landlords to recover possession of the restored holding. Thirdly, this provision would not apply to cases where the decree related to *Nakdi* land or the rent of which had been commuted or enhanced at any time since 1911. Fourthly, the provision on restoration would not apply to land which had been resettled or sold to another tenant. Fifthly, the said provision would not apply to the land that belonged to the petty landlords. These conditions made the law more complex and turned the

Restoration of Bakastha Land Act as a 'lawyer's paradise'. This got reflected in the legal cases filed under this Act. In one case of Md. Naim vs. R. Gopa, the lower court gave the judgement in favour of the tenant under the Restoration of Bakastha Land Act which got nullified in the higher courts.

Moreover, the Restoration of the Bakastha Land Act did not help the poor peasants. The agreement itself did not mention the poor peasants.<sup>63</sup> It stated that different strata of peasants would get different amount of Bakastha lands (a) Tenants whose entire holdings were from 3 acres to 10 acres should have half of their holdings returned. (b) Those holding land between 10 and 25 acres should have one-third of their sold holdings returned. (c) Those whose aggregate was from 25 to 50 acres should have one-fourth the returned. In other words, peasants holding below 3 acres was not mentioned.

The Restoration of Bakastha Land Act accentuated conflicts between the tenants and zamindars. Under this act landlords could sell the land to a third party nullifying the intention of the Act. Rajendra Prasad raised the issue with the representatives of zamindars. In a letter to Sir C.P.N. Singh, he stated, 'I am given to understand that such Bakastha land is being settled with other tenants in your zamindari, thereby making the term of the agreement infructuous or incapable of fulfillment'.<sup>64</sup> It is interesting to note that Prasad blamed the zamindars who flouted the agreement. Prasad took up the issue seriously. He enquired the matter with the help of the Congress leaders. He wrote to a Kisan Sabha representative in the Assembly: 'Will you please let me have details of fresh allotment that have been made so that I may put forward definite causes of breach to the zamindars'.<sup>65</sup> Narainji, a close associate of Prasad, raised the point with him that the tenants on Bakastha land were evicted by the special officers in Gaya.<sup>66</sup> Zamindar leaders also advised their fellow brothers to take over the Bakastha land as a part of self-cultivation. Shyamanandan Sahav advised the zamindars of Champaran to 'make it a point to cultivate those lands by all means. Take a vow that you would either cultivate them or keep them uncultivated but never give them on batai'.<sup>67</sup> Illegal action of the zamindars helped them to acquire the Bakastha land. The Act itself sided with the zamindars and had been characterised as a 'Relief to the Landlords'.<sup>68</sup>

#### A SUMMING UP

The Bihar Tenancy (Amend) Act introduced in September, 1937 was a radical legislative piece. It was completely overhauled under the pressure of the zamindars. 'The B.T. Bill stand on different footing as they are the outcome of a certain compromise between the landholders and the Congress Party in the Province'.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the leading lights of the BLHA gave a press statement, in which they acknowledged the



Bill as a pro-Zamindar piece of legislation. They thanked the Congress Government of Bihar for helping them. 'The landlords of Bihar have been able to get much more benefits which no other Government would have granted'.<sup>70</sup> There was a discernible difference between the proposed Tenancy (Amend) Bill and the one which got passed. 'We confess to a feeling of gratification that some of the more objectionable features of the draft have been modified so as to render them less objectionable though act wholly unobjectionable'.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the zamindars welcomed the Tenancy Bill as a 'stormy measure has an easy sailing' because the opposition having been silenced due to understanding between the representatives of the landlords and the leaders of the Congress Party.<sup>72</sup>

The leaders of the BLHA recognised the strength of the new Tenancy Act and pointed out the positive aspects of it. The Congress Government removed the objectionable clauses of the proposed Bill (a) The provision of the 7 year clause for recovery of arrears of rent was deleted. (b) The *bati* system was retained. (c) Illegal exaction as cognisable offence had been removed. (d) Cancellation or reduction of enhancement of rent had been kept at the discretion of the Collector. The leaders of the zamindars characterized the Tenancy reforms Act as 'the path of the golden mean, a reconciliation between the illegal facilities of the zamindars and the grievances of kisans'.<sup>73</sup> Sir G.D. Singh, an octogenarian leader taunted the Congress Government. 'This was the way of Englishmen who were slow in realising a thing, but once they realized it, they took it up earnestly. And since the Government was under the British Government, it was bound to follow the methods of latter,' said G.D. Singh.<sup>74</sup> The Advocate-General of the Government, Baldev Sahay, admitted the limitation of the Act. 'In this bill there was nothing new or drastic so far as the principles underlying the Bill were recognised from time to time and laid down in the form of various legislations including the B.T. Act. Every Tenancy legislation should be so conceived as to provide protection to the tenants while at the same time the zamindars' rights should not be infringed'.<sup>75</sup> This was the basic philosophical premise of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885.

The Kisan Sabha took a different view of Tenancy Act. They deserved, 'the antiquated and repressive land laws have not been overhauled. They have been only tinkered with'.<sup>76</sup> Jamuna Karjee spoke in the Assembly that 'the zamindars would not have got those concessions even under the Government of Yunus or Sir C.P.N. Singh which the Congress Government gave'.<sup>77</sup> This statement made 40 members of the Assembly demand his expulsion. One wonders whether, had the zamindars been themselves at the helm of affairs, they would have been able to do so much for themselves.

As regards the Moneylenders' Bill there was hardly any opposition from the zamindars' side. On the contrary, they welcomed the Bill. It

is a fact that most of the zamindars were indebted to the moneylenders who hailed from either the rich peasant strata or outsiders. In welcoming the Bill, they said, 'A good and satisfactory Bill should serve to eliminate any prevailing gross and excessive injustice and inequality to any particular section or party.'<sup>78</sup> They wanted that the Government should bring a stringent law which would regulate the moneylending activities in the countryside. Whereas they wanted a free hand for the zamindars in the arena of rent collection activities. They were of the opinion that 'the unregulated and uncontrolled credit structure of rural India should be replaced by a regulated and controlled one if the helpless agriculturist is not to be exploited furthermore. The fixation of a suitable maximum rate of interest, the making available of ready credit, the facilitation of the process of the repayment of loan in each instalment and the avoidance of unduly harsh process in the recovery of the loans—these should constitute the principal basis and criteria of sound debt legislation.'<sup>79</sup> While the Congress Government brought the bill in the Assembly, it was branded as 'a good and satisfactory bill.' They were of the opinion that a section of the class who were involved in 'moneylending activities should be out of the purview of the Act. But the Moneylenders' Bill involved a clash of interest with the business community. The Bihar Chamber of Commerce opposed the Moneylenders' Bill which was against the interest of the creditors.<sup>80</sup> The bill did not take account of the indebted peasantry who were losing their land because of the handnote system. There was no provision in the Act to nullify the handnote system. Moreover, they floated a land Mortgage Bank whose chairmanship remained in the hands of the well-known zamindar, Shyamanandan Sahay. Moreover, this was one of the demands of the BLHA.<sup>81</sup>

The Congress Government with its limited power under the 1935 Constitutional arrangement, played a mediatory role between different social classes. An interplay of zamindars, kisans and State brought into being the Tenancy Reforms (Amend) Act. It was recognised by S.K. Singh, the Prime Minister of Bihar, in an interview with Walter Hauser, that Kisan Sabha aroused a wide consciousness of the agrarian problems and had indeed brought it cogently and forcefully to the Government's attention.<sup>82</sup> On the whole the Kisan Sabha played a very crucial role in articulating the interests of peasants. Moreover, they succeeded to aggregate the demands of peasants and put them forth before the Congress Government. In transforming the demands of peasants into a policy statement, the Congress Government faced a rough weather. The law making process became the most cumbersome task. The Congress Government was under the tremendous pressure from the zamindars. It could not stand up under the conflicting pressures. The provincial leaders were playing the cards in a tactful manner. They did not want to antagonise either the zamindars or the tenants.

Their main aim was to mediate the conflicting interests in such a manner that they retain the support of both the classes. Sayed Mohmood, a Minister in the Congress Ministry, recognised the dual character of the agrarian legislations as 'moderate in comparison with the extreme demands of the Kisan Sabha and the Congress Government were holding the scales even between the two parties—the zamindars and kisans'.<sup>83</sup>

The Congress Government could not ignore the wishes of the peasants. They tried to cope with the demands of peasants. S.K. Singh, the leader of the provincial Congress, recognised the underlying reasons of the Tenancy Acts. 'the only way to prevent riots was to pass the Tenancy Bill.'

The Government was conscious that economic reasons were behind it and therefore they were anxious to adopt some measures'.<sup>84</sup> These tenancy laws did not satisfy the tenants. Alienation of peasants from the Congress Party made them more aggressive. Distrust in the law making process made them furious. Their actions got oriented against State and the zamindar class, which got reflected in the 1942 movement and afterwards.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Manifesto of the BPKS, Prasad Papers, File No. IX/36, NAI
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Election Manifesto of the Congress Party (Hindi), Prasad Papers, Vol. F.I/36, NAI.
6. *Indian Nation* 22 September, 1937.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. *Indian Nation*, 26 September, 1937.
11. *Indian Nation*, 29 September, 1937.
12. Ibid.
13. *Indian Nation*, 11 September, 1937.
14. *Indian Nation*, 15 September, 1937.
15. *Indian Nation*, 11 September, 1937.
16. Letter from Prasad to Rama Dayal Sinha, 7 December, 1937, File No. 111/37, NAI.
- 17.
18. *Indian Nation*, 29 September, 1937.
19. *Indian Nation*, 28 September, 1937.
20. *Indian Nation*, 14 August, 1937.
21. *Indian Nation*, 29 September, 1937.
22. *Indian Nation*, 14 August, 1937.
23. Congress-zamindar Agreement, Prasad Papers, File No. 11/37, NAI.
24. *Indian Nation*, 29 September, 1937.
25. *Indian Nation*, 6 November, 1937.
26. *Indian Nation*, 22 September, 1937.

27. *Indian Nation*, 16 September, 1937.
28. Congress-Zamindar Agreement, op. cit.
29. *Indian Nation*, 15 September, 1937.
30. *Indian Nation*, 16 September, 1937.
31. *Indian Nation*, 28 September, 1937.
32. *Ibid*
33. The Congress-Zamindar Agreement, op. cit.
34. *Indian Nation*, 5 August, 1937.
35. *Indian Nation*, 16 September, 1937.
36. *Indian Nation*, 22 September, 1937.
37. Congress-Zamindar Agreement, op. cit.
38. *Ibid*.
39. *Ibid*.
40. Letter from Prasad to Ramadayalu Sinha, 7 December, 1937, Prasad Paper File III/37, NAI.
41. Congress-Zamindar Agreement, op. cit.
42. Memorandum from the member of Board of Revenue, Bihar, Prasad Papers, File No. 2-M/39, NAI.
43. Rothermund, D., *Government, Landlord and Peasant in India: Agrarian Relations under British Rule*, pp. 101-115.
44. Letter from Azad to Prasad, 26 November, 1937, File No. III/37, NAI.
45. Letter from Prasad to Ramdayalu Sinha, 7 December, 1937, File No. III/37, NAI.
46. Congress-Zamindar Agreement.
47. Letter from Prasad to S.K. Singh, 27 July, 1938, File I-A/38, NAI.
48. Letter from Prasad to Shyamanandan Sahay, 8 March, 1938, File No. I-A/38, NAI.
49. Letter from Prasad to S.K. Singh, 27 July, 1938.
50. Congress-Zamindar Agreement.
51. S.L. 9 July, 1938.
52. *Ibid*.
53. Letter from Narainji to Prasad, 21 August, 1938, File I-A/38, NAI.
54. Letter from an anonymous Congressman to Prasad, 23 July, 1938, Prasad Papers, File I-A/38, NAI.
55. *Indian Nation*, 5 August, 1938.
56. *Indian Nation*, 29 August, 1938.
57. Letter from Prasad to Nehru, 10 March, 1937, Prasad Papers, File No. 1/37, NAI.
58. *Ibid*.
59. *Ibid*.
60. Letter from Prasad to C.P.N. Singh (undated), File No. III/37, NAI.
61. Congress-Zamindar Agreement.
62. *Indian Nation*, 10 September, 1940.
63. Rajendra Prasad's Suggestion on Return of Bakastha Land, Prasad Papers, File No. 1-A/38, NAI.
64. Letter from Prasad to C.P.N. Singh (undated), Prasad Papers, File No. III/37, NAI.
65. Prasad to K.P. Jha, Vice-President, Thana Kisan Sabha, Bhagalpur (Undated), File No. III/37, NAI.
66. Letter from Narainji to Prasad, 11 July, 1938, File No. 1-A/38, NAI.
67. *Indian Nation*, 17 December, 1937.
68. Relief to the Landlords by A.P. Sinha in the Congress Socialist, Vol. 3, No. 35, 27 August, 1938.
69. *Indian Nation*, 13 September, 1938.
70. *Janata*, 5 October, 1939.
71. *Indian Nation*, 8 December, 1937.
72. *Indian Nation*, 19 December, 1937.

73. *Indian Nation*, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1937.
74. Ibid.
75. *Indian Nation*, 23 September, 1937.
76. 'Relief to Zamindars', in the Congress Socialist, 27 August, 1938.
77. *Indian Nation*, 29 July, 1938.
78. *Indian Nation*, 11 December, 1937.
79. *Indian Nation*, 2 November, 1937.
80. *Indian Nation*, 6 April, 1940.
81. *Indian Nation*, 11 September, 1937.
82. Hauser, W., op. cit., pp. 153-54.
83. *Indian Nation*, 22 October, 1937.
84. *Indian Nation*, 21 December, 1939.

LATA SINGH\*

## *The Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement—1933–1939*

In the 1930s the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha launched a number of movements. It organized many satyagraha struggles, demonstrations and meetings. The Kisan Sabha was largely responsible for building a rural base for the Congress in Bihar and contributed significantly to the Congress' overwhelming victory in the 1937 elections. The increasing radicalisation of the Kisan Sabha forced the Congress to adopt a populist posture. However, despite the crucial role played by the Kisan Sabha it could not fundamentally alter the feudal agrarian structure. Though the peasant struggles involved a wide spectrum of the peasantry, they remained 'partial struggles'. This implied that although the Kisan Sabha could launch movements around issues like rent reduction, debt moratorium, Bakasht lands, etc. certain basic demands, like the abolition of the zamindari, could not be sustained as the basis of a popular movement. Moreover, despite the participation of some of the low caste, 'poor' peasants, it remained a 'middle' and 'rich' peasant movement, with the agricultural labourers remaining peripheral to it. These are some of the issues taken up in this paper.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was formally established in 1929 November at Sonapur. Although there existed some local Kisan Sabha in 1920s they were not stable organisations and mainly functioned for securing the voter's support during the elections. The immediate impetus to form the Kisan Sabha came from the government's decision to introduce a Tenancy (Kashtkari) Bill in 1929 which would have strengthened the zamindar's power *vis-à-vis* tenants. The founders of the Sabha, united in their opposition to the proposed Bill, met at Sonapur in November 1929. As a result, the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was finally established.<sup>1</sup> It was decided that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha would not oppose Congress on political matters. The activities of the Kisan Sabha had to be postponed soon after due to the on going Civil Disobedience Movement. During 1933–1939 the Kisan Sabha was very active. It launched a number of agrarian movements. This, in turn, was due to the existing socio-economic

\*Department of History, Maitreyi College, Delhi University.

context and the political atmosphere. The 'great depression' had not only resulted in sudden crash of prices but had also disrupted the entire structure of rural credit. This had made payment of rent extremely difficult for the tenants. Many of them had fallen into rent-arrears and many tenants had their lands sold by the zamindars. These factors had provided the material basis for the discontent of the peasantry. Their discontent was articulated by the Kisan Sabha.

After the establishment of Kisan organisation, the Kisan Sabha first took up the rent issue. The high levels of rent in the context of low agricultural process had led to general discontent among the tenants.<sup>2</sup> The Kisan Sabha, in its Gaya session in 1934, appealed to the government to use Section 112 of the Bengal Tenancy Act for fixing the rate of rent in accordance with the changed circumstances as the tenants found the existing rates quite unbearable.<sup>3</sup> Swami Sahajanand advocated full remission of rents at least for one year to save the kisans from utter ruin.<sup>4</sup> However, the general emphasis of the Kisan Sabha was on reduction of rents by 50 per cent and the cancellation of arrears.

Widespread agitation followed in favour of the rent reduction call of the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha. The campaigns were strongest in Shahabad, Patna, Gaya, Darbhanga and Monghyr districts. The raiyats of Monghyr submitted a petition to the government asking for reduction of rent. A number of Kisan Sabha meetings were held in Tikari estate in Gaya. There was a demonstration with the slogan 'Reduce the rent by half.'<sup>5</sup> The Kisan Sabha propaganda thus led to rents being withheld at many places by the tenants. But on the other hand, the tenants who had fallen into arrears and were unable to pay rents had to face eviction. This formed the background of the famous Bakasht struggle launched during 1936-39.

The Kisan Sabha had also taken up the issue of rural indebtedness almost simultaneously with the rent-reduction campaign. In one of his speeches in 1934 Sahajanand demanded a moratorium on debt for a period of one year.<sup>6</sup> In 1935, the Kisan Sabha took a definite stand on this issue. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Council passed a resolution considering it necessary that the 'the government should appoint a committee to investigate thoroughly the appalling indebtedness of the rural population with a view to devise ways and means of liquidating agricultural indebtedness.'<sup>7</sup> It also demanded that the highest rate of interest should be fixed by law at 6 per cent per annum. However, in succeeding years, the Kisan Sabha did not press the issue further except for its inclusion in its manifesto of 1936.<sup>8</sup>

The Kisan Sabha had till now concentrated on these agitational themes. It had not yet developed any coherent ideology or even a long-term programme. Its members were linked together due to common grievances and not because of any commitment to 'revolution' or structural change. It can be pointed out here that the character of the movement, at least till the middle of 1936, was purely reformist and its

leaders wanted to work well within the given constitutional framework. Further, it was dominated by the 'rich' and the 'middle' peasants—a limitation which continued even later and a fact which was accepted by Sahajanand.

From 1936 onwards, the Kisan Sabha was to involve itself in the 'Bakasht agitation'. Bakasht lands consisted of lands in which zamindars exercised direct control over cultivation but under certain circumstances, tenants could claim occupancy rights on it. However, the exact nature of these land-rights remained obscure and in practice both the Bakasht and the zirat lands were treated as belonging to the zamindar. Due to the growing kisan agitation and certain legislative measures of the government, intended to bestow some rights on the tenantry, there had developed a tendency among the zamindars by 1920s to convert the ryoti lands into Bakasht lands. Taking advantage of the current crisis of the 'depression' and the consequent rent-arrears of the tenants, the zamindars got the latter's holdings sold up in many cases. The buyers of these holdings were often the zamindars themselves who could now lease out the land on a short-term basis after converting it into Bakasht to secure the advantages of cultivation and make better profits. Evictions and conversion of tenant land had become a universal problem in the province. In Aurangabad district, 6000 bighas of land were sold in Ibrahimpur. In Jitura in Shahabad area 500 bighas were sold in a village for arrears of rent and 300 bighas were converted in zirat.<sup>9</sup>

The tenants, especially those who were evicted from their land, were very badly affected. The tenants enumerated their grievances before the Kisan Enquiry Committee. The tenants of the Amawan Raj (Gaya district) reported that:

- (a) they were charged with very high rents;
- (b) they were forced to render *begari* or forced labour and supply vegetables and ghee free of cost;
- (c) they were rarely granted rent-receipts, and, in the case of smaller landlords, it was noted that rent receipts, were never given at all;
- (d) original tenants were being dispossessed and in their place other tenants were settled. The situation of tenants in other localities was also similar.<sup>10</sup>

The ground for an agrarian agitation had been prepared due to these developments. The Provincial Kisan Sabha was leading the movement against the conversion of lands at many places. The most legendary among the Bakasht struggles were launched in Monghyr (at Barahiya Tal) and Gaya (at Deora) districts under the leaderships of Karyanand Sharma and Jadunandan Sharma respectively. The usual methods adopted in the struggle consisted of petitions, meetings, demonstrations and speeches at the beginning of the struggle. Later the



tenants increasingly resorted to Satyagraha and also to crop-looting and violence in some cases. It was observed that tenants had become aggressive and 'used the weapons of combination and agitation'.<sup>11</sup> However, there was no well chalked out programme for the entire province or even a particular region and even the leaders were inconsistent in their speeches regarding the forms or the programme of struggle.

At Monghyr, Karyanand Sharma led a demonstration of one thousand raiyats in 1936 to the District Collector and presented a charter of their demands to him. But before it could crystallise into a full-grown movement it was ruthlessly suppressed.<sup>12</sup> Karyanand Sharma who advocated the method of 'peaceful Satyagraha' at the Provincial Kisan Congress in December 1938, was reported to have led a 'mob' of 500 Kisans armed with 'lathies' who surrounded a Government Khalihan to oppose threshing operations, in the month of April 1939.<sup>13</sup> Having failed to reach any positive result Karyanand Sharma finally decided to launch a Satyagraha at the court of Monghyr. Many jathas of kisans reached there. On the 22nd and 23rd of May 1939, the Satyagrahis at Monghyr held up the trains by lying on the railway line to press for their demands.<sup>14</sup> After the arrest of Karyanand and other leaders, the court of Monghyr, however, settled about 1000 bighas of land in favour of the tenants. The only other achievements of the agitation could be seen at Kusumbha Tal, where the zamindar agreed to accept the tenant's rights in about 1800 bighas of land.<sup>15</sup>

The movement in Gaya was also quite intense and at times assumed violent dimensions. In Tikari estate of Gaya, the Kisan Sabha had launched a Satyagraha campaign in February 1936. Here the lands belonging to certain tenants were sold up by the Tikari estate in realisation of tent and then bought in. The friction arose when the estate claimed two-thirds of the crop which was lying in the Khalihan. The villagers, including the women, did Satyagraha on the Khalihan and prevented the division of the crops until the sub-divisional officer intervened and settled the matter by making a half and half division.<sup>16</sup>

At Dharaut in police station Makhadampur (Gaya) Jadunandan Sharma advised the Kisans not to give up their possession of Bakasht lands. He also told them that 'they would be justified in assaulting trespassers, or landlords who did not given receipt for rent paid by Kisans.'<sup>17</sup>

The movement in Gaya was also more organised than in other places. Jadunandan Sharma had opened a volunteers camp at Deora to provide training in 'self-defence'. Two other camps were also opened at Goosar (Jehanabad) and Deo (Aurangabad). The members of those camps were reported to be 'visiting the villages around and

investigating the tenants to take forcible possession of the Bakasht Land and shouting slogans such as 'Lathi Zindabad'.<sup>18</sup>

At the Kisan Conferencés at Masaurhi (Patna district) held in the month of December 1938, Sahajanand appealed to the kisans that they should make Deora their pilgrimage centre. Hearing this, hundreds of kisans rushed to Deora and supported the Satyagraha by providing food and money to the fighters.<sup>19</sup> Despite strong repression by the zamindars and the police machinery, the Kisan Sabha was able to achieve some success at Deora. The District Magistrate of Gaya made a settlement with Jadunandan Sharma on behalf of zamindars and four-fifths of the disputed land was awarded to the tenants.<sup>20</sup> However, following the settlement, there ensued differences amongst the peasants as the Bhumihar tenants disapproved of 'Jadunandan Sharma's socialist distribution of land in equal shares to the raiyats whether of high or low castes'.<sup>21</sup>

The Bakasht struggle was strong in some other regions too such as Patna, Shahabad, Saran, Champaran and Darbhanga.

By the end of 1939, however, the movement had begun to fade. The Bakasht Resolution Act passed by the Congress Ministry in 1938 helped in improving the conditions of the tenants to some extent. The Act had stipulated that rights of the tenants whose holdings were less than 6 acres and whose lands had been sold during 1928–35 would be totally restored. Further, the phase of 'depression' was also coming to an end with the onset of the Second World War. The rise in food prices and two successive good harvests in the years 1938 and 1939 also diluted the movement. The situation in the country side was described as 'usually quiet' by January 1940.<sup>22</sup>

## II

The primary instruments of mass-mobilization adopted by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha were meetings, speeches, demonstrations and propaganda. Sahajanand used to tour extensively in the rural areas and thus, alongwith his speeches popularised the Kisan Sabha. Between 1933 and 1935, about 500 meetings and conferences were organised by the Kisan Sabhas and Sahajanand was present at least in 350 meetings out of these. These meetings were enthusiastically attended by the peasants everywhere.<sup>23</sup>

The Kisan Sabha records show that it had 33,000 members in 1933 which increased to 70,000 in 1936. The figure for 1938 is 2,50,000. The structure and pattern of mobilisation of the peasantry was contingent upon the issues it chose to take up.<sup>24</sup>

The Kisan Sabha framed its constitution and issued its manifesto in 1936. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha manifesto outlined the basic and immediate demands of the peasantry. The basic demands included : (a) the zamindari system should be abolished, (b) the agrarian debt be

wiped off, (c) a system of land-tenure be established which makes the peasants owners of their holdings, and taxes only those who have income above a minimum, necessary to keep them and their families at a reasonable standard for living, (d) gainful employment be provided for the landless.

Apart from these basic demands the Kisan Sabha took up local issues of immediate relevance. These included, among others, fixing of tenure, right of free transfer of holdings and unrestricted use of land and their products, provision by legislation for free common pastures, abolition of all systems of rent in kind, cancellation of all arrears of rent, and reduction of rent and canal rates by 50 per cent, limiting the maximum rate of interest to 6 per cent, abolition of chaukidari tax, minimum wages for agricultural workers and the right to vote for every adult.<sup>25</sup>

The formal organizational structure of the Kisan Sabha was expressed through the rules of 1929 and the constitution formed in 1936. The objective of the organisation stated in both the documents were the same, namely, 'the peasants organising themselves (. . . through Kisan Sabha) should win their fundamental rights through peaceful means.' The 1936 constitution merely indicated that this was to be done on the basis of 'economic questions'. The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha was organised more or less on the pattern of the Bihar Provincial Congress. The branches of the Kisan Sabha constituted of District Kisan Sabhas and Thana Kisan Councils at district and thana levels respectively.<sup>26</sup>

The organisation of the Kisan Sabha was, however, more functional than formal. Walter Hauser, however, views it only as 'a movement which could not develop into a formal organisation'.<sup>27</sup> Arvind N. Das also points out that despite the efforts of Swami Sahajanand to give the Kisan Sabha a formal organisational structure, it remained more a movement than an organisation. He accepts, however, that the movement was institutionalised in a way after 1934, though its primary instruments of operation continued to be numerous meetings, demonstrations, annual conventions rather than paper work.<sup>28</sup>

However, there are two factors to be noted here. Firstly, the Kisan Sabha was a conglomeration of members owing their allegiance to different political parties such as INC, CSP, CPI. Thus it had become a common platform for the members of these parties having some similarities in their ideological beliefs for launching agrarian agitation or for mobilising the support of peasantry for their political ends. In such a situation, it was obvious that the character of the organisation had to essentially remain fluid. Secondly, the concept of party as an organisation had evolved only in recent times. Thus, it was the 'informal ties' existing in the countryside that contributed to the functional effectiveness of the Kisan Sabha.

In the very nature of things, the Kisan Sabha in which workers belonging to different parties such as the Congress, CSP, CPI and many

independent and unaffiliated persons worked, could not be a party in the modern sense. Further, the organised numerical strength of such a movement depended to a great extent on the appeal of the issues taken up, and their immediate relevance. Whenever the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha raised a mass-issue, 'such as rent-enhancement during the depression' or *Bekasht* disputes, it could successfully mobilize and organise the peasantry but whenever, such an issue did not exist, its organized numerical strength was bound to recede.

One of the most important aspects of any movement is its social base. The Bihar Kisan Movement, despite its overtures to patronise poor peasants and landless labourers, remained a middle/rich peasant movement in terms of its programmes, achievements and, to some extent, its ideology.

Macdonald's study emphasizes the 'power pursuit' which the Kisan Sabha leaders were engaged in. According to him, it was the prosperous section of peasantry which constituted the core of the Kisan Sabha leadership.<sup>29</sup> Walter Hauser does not explicitly discuss the social base of the Kisan Sabha leadership, though he indicates that it consisted of rich and middle peasants. He says that the younger leaders attracted by Sahajanand were 'mostly landholders of at least moderate means because only they were capable of providing an education to a son and, when the time came, of supporting a family member in a political career.' These people were referred to as 'small landed gentry' who were joined by the 'political adventures . . . the half educated product of high schools and colleges.'<sup>30</sup>

Stephan Henningham, too, has characterised the Kisan Sabha leadership as high caste men from zamindari backgrounds. As regards the social composition of the participants, he says that their 'supporters were mainly middle caste peasants who sought to defend themselves against zamindari pressure. Such people held themselves distinct from the low caste Harijan and Adivasi peasants whom they often themselves oppressed.'<sup>31</sup>

In fact, most of the scholars are in agreement with the view that the Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement was dominated by the 'rich' and the 'middle' peasants. Leaders from these categories did possess far more land than was the case with ordinary agriculturalists. By and large their family background showed that only a few of them could be ranked as poor peasants possessing less than 3 acres of land, and who were cultivating themselves. It is significant though, that the two prominent leaders, Jadunandan Sharma and Karyanand Sharma, belonged almost to the rank of poor peasants. Swami Sahajanand came from a middle peasant family. Unlike the poor peasantry, the middle peasants, however, had some amount of literacy and some acquaintance with the legal procedures, survey settlements and the recent history of land-arrangements. Therefore, they could argue out the case for the restoration of the lands seized from them and regarding the occupancy

rights of the tenants. The benefits of the Bakasht struggle also accrued mostly to the middle peasants.<sup>32</sup>

However, this factor was not peculiar to the Kisan Sabha Movement of Bihar only. This was a dilemma faced by the leaders of most of the contemporary movements and it was only in parts of coastal Andhra that agricultural labourers and poor peasants could be organised successfully into the movement.<sup>33</sup> It can be due to the fact that 'the poor peasants are initially the least militant class of the peasantry . . . he finally and irrevocably takes the road to revolution only when he is shown in practice that the power of the master can be irrevocably broken and the possibility of an alternative mode of existence becomes real to his (them).'<sup>34</sup>

The Kisan Sabha movement had started with reformist themes and an attempt was made to reconcile divergent interests to form a united front against the British colonialism. Its character in the earlier phase, at least upto 1936, was not influenced by the heterogeneous nature of the peasantry.<sup>35</sup> The earliest constitutional document of the Bihar Kisan Sabha had defined a 'peasant as anyone whose primary source of livelihood was agriculture.' The Kisan Sabha manifesto of 1936 also emphasised the unity of peasants'. It declared that 'the Sabha stands not only for the raiyats but also for petty zamindars and agricultural labourers—in other words for all who live by cultivation'.<sup>36</sup>

That the class-character of the Kisan Sabha movement remained obscure upto 1936 is revealed by two facts. Firstly, its rent reduction and debt moratorium campaigns (1933–36) were clearly meant to provide relief to the rich and middle peasants within the existing legal framework. The Bihar Kisan Sabha had demanded only a 50 per cent rent reduction and moratorium on debt for one year. This could hardly solve the problems of the poor peasantry, who even during 'depression' had to pay rents as high as Rs 24 per bigha.<sup>37</sup>

The second fact which can be highlighted was the silence of the Kisan Sabha upto 1936 on the question of landless labourers—a class which it could never integrate or mobilise within its movement. It was in the introduction of the Hindi edition of the Kisan Sabha manifesto (1936) that Swami Sahajanand considered an agricultural labourer as a peasant. He said: 'a peasant is known as Grihastha, a person who earns his livelihood by cultivation and agriculture, be he a petty landlord, ryot or labourer working on wages for ploughing fields.'<sup>38</sup>

By lumping these categories together in theory, Sahajanand felt that there was no need for a separate organisation of agricultural labourers. He did nothing in practice to project their class-interests. He reiterated his 'united front' approach on this issue also. To quote: 'The Kisan Sabha does not desire that by creating a separate organisation of agricultural labourers, strife should be let loose between them and landlords and ryots.'<sup>39</sup>

Sahajanand's views on the class-characterisation of the zamindars were equally inconsistent. He seemed to have divided the class of zamindars into two—big and small. According to him big zamindars were the only oppressive class whose interests were located in the exploitation of the rent of the society. On the other hand, he found small zamindars nearer to tenants (in terms of class-interest) and he sought to unite them in a common fight against the big zamindars. Even the Kisan Sabha manifesto of 1936 clearly stated: 'The sabha not only stands for the raiyats, but also for petty zamindars . . .'<sup>40</sup> This affinity for the small zamindars and the tendency to take them along with the tenants in the movement was observed till as late as 1939. He issued a statement in April 1939 appealing to the 'petty zamindars to throw in their lot with the Kisan Sabha with which their interests are linked and assuring them that the Kisan Sabha does not aim at dispossessing them but the big zamindars by whom they were exploited.'<sup>41</sup>

This kind of class-analysis offered by Sahajanand was clearly inimical to the growth of the movement. It was observed that his attempt 'to lure the petty zamindars into his camp had been received with considerable scepticism and it is hardly consistent with the agitation which has been going on for some months against the petty zamindars at Muriar, Sahabad.'<sup>42</sup> This was true for many other places as well where Bakasht struggles were being launched against small landlords. Further it can be said that while the big zamindars were oppressive, the small zamindars were no less exploitative. Their exploitation also tended to increase in times of crisis, which made it even more unbearable for the tenants.<sup>43</sup> Clearly then, Sahajanand's understanding of the hierarchical structure of exploitation existing in countryside was not in tune with the existential conditions of the tenants. This approach of Sahajanand can also account for the failure of the Kisan Sabha in launching a successful or a popular movement against the 'zamindari abolition'.

Sahajanand himself admitted that he had begun as a class-collaborator. He wrote, 'my sole object in doing so (setting up the Kisan Sabha) was to get the grievances of the Kisans redressed by mere agitation and propaganda and thus to eliminate all chances of clashes between the Kisans and zamindars which seemed imminent . . . and thus threatened to destroy the all round national unity so necessary to achieve freedom. Thus I began the organised Kisan Sabha as a staunch collaborator.'<sup>44</sup> It can be pointed out here that Sahajanand himself was initially reluctant to adopt anti-zamindari resolution and it was only at the instance of some Congress Socialist Party leaders that he eventually did so in 1936. He himself had opposed the anti-zamindari resolution proposed by Purushottam Das Tandon at the Provincial Kisan Conference at Gaya in 1935.<sup>45</sup> Further, in April 1936, he gave a very 'moderate' speech at Sutihara (Muzaffarpur district) in which he apparently committed himself to the statement that the Kisan Sabha

did not wish to abolish landlordism.<sup>46</sup> And after just two months later, he reluctantly agreed to the inclusion of zamindari abolition as one of the basic demands in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabbha manifesto of July 1936.<sup>47</sup>

However in fairness to Sahajanand it can be pointed out that this inconsistency in his approach was due to the precarious position of the small zamindars. It was an ambiguity which was characteristic not only of his thought and analysis only but also of the most of the agrarian movements of the time. The small zamindars were exploitative but unlike the big zamindars their exploitation did not emerge from a clear position of strength in the local organisation of power or distribution of wealth. Very often, their incomes and fortunes also varied with time as was the case with peasants too. Therefore, it was mostly the fear that they might be reduced to paupery especially in times of crises, that made them cling more strongly to this existing hierarchical structure of exploitation.

### III

Thus two phases can be discerned in the Kisan movement. The first phase which continued since its inception upto 1936 was quite moderate. The Kisan Sabha took up issues like rent reduction and debt-moratorium. In these campaigns, The Kisan Sabha achieved very little immediate success, but the ground was prepared for the next phase of the movement. The most important feature of the first phase was that the Kisan Sabha was working its movements within the legal boundaries.

After 1936, the intensity of the Kisan Sabha movement increased mainly due to the increasing disputes between zamindars and tenants over the Bakasht lands. It organized many Satyagraha struggles, demonstrations and meetings, during this phase. Though the Bakasht struggle, involved a wide spectrum of the peasantry, they remained 'partial struggles'. The Kisan Sabha was successful in getting the grievances of tenants partly redressed only in some areas in the Gaya, Monghyr and Darbhanga districts. Elsewhere, its immediate achievements remained insignificant.

The movement remained a 'middle' and 'rich' peasant movement, despite some participation of lower caste poor peasants in it. The Kisan Sabha could launch agitations and mobilise the peasantry only around its 'immediate demands'. The basic demands included the 'abolition of zamindari' but it was never able to secure and maintain a popular movement on this vital issue in this period, though it succeeded in placing this demand on the agenda for struggle and in popularising it among the peasantry. No section of the Bihar peasants demanded in their struggles the complete extinction of the right of the state to a share in the agricultural surplus, nor did any section of the

peasantry organise a struggle around the demand for the abolition of zamindari or landlordism. In other words, neither the abolition of land revenue and other taxes nor the abolition of zamindari or landlordism was ever part of the immediate demands or actual programme of struggle of the Kisan Sabha. These demands were raised at the annual conferences of the Kisan Sabha, were enshrined in the manifestoes, were repeated at Kisan Conferences and were part of the consciousness of the leaders but did not reach down and become part of the consciousness of the peasantry. At least, they did not become so integral a part of the peasant's consciousness of their legitimate rights that they were willing to launch struggles on that basis or incorporated them in their actual politics.

The role of tradition, history and custom was clearly very important in determining the peasants existing level of consciousness of fair and legitimate rights. The Kisan Sabha took up issues like rent reduction, debt moratorium, struggle over Bakasht land etc. These were considered as legitimate rights of the Bihar peasantry. As seen, none of these stemmed from a revolutionary change in the consciousness of Kisans; instead they formed a part of their traditional consciousness. Thus the peasants resisted new impositions by landlords, money lenders and the state, they questioned changes in their legal and tenurial status. They struggled for what they thought was theirs by virtue of their past history, their customary claims, legal sanctions, etc. The Bakasht issue had provoked a part of the traditional consciousness of the peasantry by denying them rights on these lands which they had been cultivating by custom for years.<sup>48</sup>

Thus the Kisan Sabha led peasant struggles were not characterised by organised attempts to physically confront either the government or the landlords or the money lenders nor did they attempt forcible seizures of land. In fact, many of these struggles were 'agitational' in character, and they concentrated on enlisting members, founding of the Kisan Sabha, holding provincial conferences and meetings of the district, taluqa and the village level, organising kisan marches, mass demonstrations, rallies, etc.

To acknowledge this fact should not, however, marginalise the role of the Kisan Sabha in undermining the political and the social hold of the zamindari elements. Neither does it mean that the old basis of zamindari exploitation remained unaltered. All that needs to be emphasised is that while the peasants struggled for immediate demands, the abolition of zamindari, 'land to the tiller' or the abolition of land revenue did not evolve as concrete demands. However, one needs to add here that these peasant struggles created the climate for zamindari abolition and other types of land reforms in Bihar.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Swami Sahajanand, *Mera Jeevan Sangharsh*, Delhi, 1985, p. 205.
2. Ibid., p. 251
3. B.B. Chaudhary, 'Agrarian Movement in Bihar and Bengal', A.R. Desai, ed., *Peasant Struggles in India*, Delhi, 1971, pp. 202-203.
4. *Search Light*, 18 March, 1934.
5. Bihar FR (1), April 1936.
6. *Search Light*, 18 March, 1934.
7. Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha, *Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha Ki Report 1929-1935*, P. 26.
8. Kisan Enquiry Committee Report, *Rajendra Prasad Papers*, File No. VII 1937, COL.I
9. Ibid. Zirat Lands was the property of the zamindars, in which no other right existed.
10. Ibid.
11. Bihar, FR, March-April 1939.
12. Swami Sahajanand, Op.cit., pp. 314-326.
13. Bihar, FR (2), April 1939.
14. Bihar, FR (1), May 1939.
15. Swami Sahajanand, Op. Cit., P. 315
16. Bihar, FR. (1) February 1936.
17. Bihar, FR (1), October 1938.
18. Bihar, FR (1), November 1938.
19. Swami Sahajanand, Op. Cit P. 318.
20. Ibid., pp. 319-20.
21. Bihar, Fr (1), May 1939.
22. Bihar, FR, 1938 and 1939.
23. Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha, Op. Cit., pp. 4-5.
24. Ibid., p. 34. AIKS Report, 1938-39.
25. *Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Manifesto*, 1936.
26. *Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha Ka Vidhan*, 1936.
27. Walter Hauser, 'The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929-1942 : A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1961, Micro Film, NMML, Delhi, p. 156.
28. Arvind N. Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980*, Delhi, 1981, p. 111.
29. Macdonald's 'Unity on Trial, Congress in Bihar 1929-39, D.A. in Low, ed., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47*, Delhi, 1977, p. 301.
30. Walter Hauser, Op. Cit., p. 76.
31. Stephen Henningham, *Peasant Movement in Colonial India, North Bihar 1917-1942*, Canberra, 1982, p. 166.
32. G.P. Sharma, 'Congress, Peasant Movement and Tenancy Legislation in Bihar, 1937-39', M.Phil. Dissertation, CHS, JNU 1979, p. 112.
33. P. Sunderaya, *Telengana People's Struggles and Its Lessons*, Calcutta, 1972, pp. 116-18.
34. Hamza Alavi, 'Peasants and Revolution', A.R. Desai, ed., *Rural Sociology in India*, Bombay, 1969, p. 422.
35. *Bihar Provincial Kisan Constitution*, 1929.
36. *Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Manifesto*, 1936.
37. Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit.
38. Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Manifesto, 1936.
39. Ibid.
40. *Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha Manifesto*, 1936.
41. Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha, op. cit.

42. Bihar, FR (2), April, 1939.
43. Kisan Enquiry Committee Report 1936, op. cit.
44. Swami Sahajanand, op. cit., pp. 193–94, 248.
45. Ibid, p. 267.
46. Bihar, FR (1), May 1936.
47. Swami Sahajanand, op. cit., p. 269.
48. Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free : Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381*, London 1977, discusses the role of custom and the popular tradition of protest.

ANSHU MALHOTRA\*

## *The Moral Woman and the Urban Punjabi Society of the Late Nineteenth Century*

The *Satyarth Prakash* of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was not just a book of Religion. Rather, it was meant to be a moral code of conduct, a guide for the *Aryan People* to adhere to. As such, the Swami had taken pains to spell out the model character of an Aryan woman, among other things. He had given the 'woman question' a centrality because he perceived women to be the key to the maintenance of caste purity; and because he wished to exploit the reproductive capability of women, so that a judicious sexual union would produce the required Aryan male progeny.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati died in the year 1883. He died too early, his followers felt, without giving them adequate guidance to follow his precepts as taught in the *Satyarth Prakash*. They, nevertheless, endeavoured to be true to his word, and to make the *Satyarth Prakash* their spiritual guide. This was especially true of his followers in Punjab, where the number of Arya Samajis grew rapidly. By 1891, their number was 24,458, which increased to 65,282 by 1901.<sup>1</sup> This was a stupendous growth, if we keep in mind that it was only in 1877 that the Swami had first visited Punjab.

The 'woman question' retained its importance in the post-Dayananda period. Dayananda's followers, the Arya Samajis, took up the question with all the zealotry of a newly created sect. However, their voice lacked the authority of the *brahmachari* Swami who had the support of a haloed tradition of *synyas* behind him to carry forth his message. The new Aryas were drawn primarily from a trading-professional and urban class, the Khatris, Sudhs and Aroras,<sup>2</sup> the upper castes of Punjab.

If we take the first eight classes in the Hindu social system, it will be seen that they comprise about 62 per cent of the total numbers of Hindus (in the Punjab), and 98 per cent of Aryas . . .<sup>3</sup>

As such, they were involved in a quest for seeking a new identity for themselves, that would give them 'self-respect and recognition in a

---

\*Department of History, Sri Venkateswara College Delhi University

situation where they came into contact with the new colonializing state everyday. These classes also felt and articulated the humiliation of the 'nation', at being colonized. Thus they were deeply involved in, and gave a new urgency to the nation-building enterprise. Their need for self-respect was closely related to the need for national self-respect. The manner in which they dealt with the 'woman question' had a lot to do with this circumstance.

The quest for a self-enhancing new identity was not the peculiar task of only the Aryas. Other groups, sects, communities were involved in a similar search for self-respect. Among the Hindus there were groups like the *Sanatanis*, the *Brahmos*, the *Dev Dharmis*, besides the Aryas, each of which was grappling with the need to have a separate identity, as well as be a part of the Hindu community. The Sikh and the Muslim communities, too, saw a similar development. The Sikhs were involved in a concerted attempt to establish an identity separate from the Hindus. The Muslims, being seen increasingly as the ultimate 'others' by the Hindus and the Sikhs were trying to come to terms with their 'otherness' and spelling out the need for a 'purer' 'Muslim' identity. These varied groups, could at times, come together against the 'onslaughts' of the Christian Missionaries with their zeal for conversion of the low-caste 'natives'. But on the whole, it was a period marked more by their attempt to define the distinction between themselves.

Dayananda's ideas were received by an urban Punjab, questioning older forms of ordering lives and seeking out a more meaningful existence in the circumstance of ideological conflict with the colonial state. The British came into Punjab with their developed ideas of the 'barbarity' of the native society in its treatment of women, and having marked out the areas where change was desirable. Thus, questions of child-marriage, child-widowhood, *parda-system* were made a target by the state to beat the native society with. The state also undertook a minute study of customs, traditions, cast and tribes of the native society, to formulate the knowledge essential for the ideological hegemony over the colonized peoples. It also encouraged the Christian Missionaries to not only spread the gospel amongst the natives, but also among other things, to teach them how to treat their women better.

Dayananda's ideas on the 'woman question' were novel in Punjab which had not witnessed intense reformist activity till the 1870s. The new role-models for women, formulated by Dayananda, generated a massive controversy, as they tried to replace existing patterns of women's lives with ones promising better adjustment to new life-styles. This claim of greater suitability to new circumstances was not accepted by all—and alternative role—models were proffered.

Thus, women's issues became the ideological battleground on which varied participants debated the possibilities of forging new identities. The concern was not so much with humanising women's lives as much as

how women could be utilised as symbols, for proclaiming a better status for a particular sect. The women's question became a site for composition of various group identities. Out of these debates, at the turn of the century, a powerful image of a moral, nurturing, spiritual Mother India was to develop, symbolizing the essence of the cultural superiority of the Indians. But this was preceded by a period when this image had not yet crystallized, it was in the process of formation. This paper is a study of those debates in urban Punjab, which ultimately led to the conceptualization of that nationalist image. The participants were various sects and communities, who, in the meanwhile, were trying to make their women 'moral', to achieve dignity and self-respect for themselves.

There seems to have taken place an important development in the debate on women's question from the time in which Dayananda was writing. Dayananda's interest lay in creating a 'manly' race of Aryas. And he tried to utilize women primarily for the reproduction of this race. The issue of women's morality was undoubtedly important but it remained subsidiary to this all-important concern.

Dayananda's concern with 'manliness' echoed a similar interest displayed by the middle-class elite elsewhere in India. Speaking of Bankim Chandra's insistence on a Bengali historiography for history of Bengal (and India) a part of his project of nation-formation (*jatipratishtha*), Ranajit Guha has shown the central place of *bahubol* (a physical strength of arms) of Hindus in it.<sup>4</sup> It was especially important to show the physical prowess of the Hindus, when the physical power of the British seemed insuperable (after the Mutiny, and the triumph of the British in the Anglo-Sikh wars).

However, in time, the nationalist project became equally if not more concerned with establishing the spiritual superiority of the Indians. The spiritual sphere was seen as an area where the contribution of the Indians was unsurpassed. Bankimchandra, in his later years, along with stressing the importance of *bahubol* was amongst the first nationalist ideologues to proclaim India's spiritual and moral domination to the world.<sup>5</sup>

This changing idiom of nationalism, perhaps took place because the Indians felt their physical powers established (Lajpat Rai, e.g., would take the physical parity of Indians with Europeans for granted). The 'discovery' of the Aryan origin of both these peoples may have contributed to that self-confidence. However, it was a concern that was not altogether given up, and a significant section of Arya Samaj stayed involved in that debate. Also the colonial state, by the end of the nineteenth century gave up legitimization of its rule on the argument of its superior physical force, as it assumed the role of '*mai-baap*' of Indian masses.

The 1890s in the Punjab, witnessed the beginnings of this changing rhetoric of nationalism. The important concern with physical fitness

remained. Theories of heredity doing the rounds in this period were studied to ensure reproduction of a fit race. However, middle-class nationalists devoted more energy in establishing the superiority of the Indians in the spiritual-moral sphere, in contrast to the Western material society. Also, the superiority of a community or a sect was constructed around questions of morality. The symbolic value of moral women was utilized for these constructions.

The ubiquitous presence of the British State created its own divisions. 'The State, which was initially seen to be presenting the professional classes with such undreamt of opportunities, that they never stopped talking of *Angrezi Raj ki barkaten*'<sup>6</sup> (the virtues of the British Raj) was later perceived to be by-passing the interests of the same classes. By the end of the nineteenth century, it posed more and more as the protector of 'agrarian tribes and classes' (evidenced, for example, in the Land Alienation Act of 1901), introducing a division between the urban and the rural. Again, the 'pro-Muslim policies' of the British administration, increasingly attracted the flak of an allegedly 'pro-Hindu' Congress, and the Arya-Samajis were caught between the need to affirm their loyalty to the British and the non-political nature of their organization, and a desire to safeguard their 'Hindu' interests in alliance with the Congress.

The Punjab of the 1890s saw these various groups caught in a battle with each other, wherein the positive quality of one group, it seemed, could only be highlighted when the negative quality of another was shown up. Such a situation was productive of a vitiated atmosphere.

However, a common theme underlined all the debates that this period witnessed. This was the new reformist attitude of these sects in Punjab, and an ethic of puritan morality to which most middle-class groups adhered. Each group tried to establish its own high standard of morality, by accusing the other of being immoral. And the final arbitrator in this game of accusations and counter-accusations was the British State, which, often, laid down the parameters defining morality. For example, in the Census of 1901, the State tried to pass a judgement on the moral standards of the Hindus.

The code of morality of the ordinary Hindu is much the same as that of most civilized nations, though, it is nowhere reduced to a code. He knows it is wrong to commit murder, adultery, theft, perjury or to covet, and he honours his parents . . . . The influence of the caste is, however, of the greatest importance here, and some enquiries (sic) have expressed their opinion that the principal sanction attaching to a breach of morality is the fear of caste penalties rather than the dread of divine punishment . . . Almost any moral law may be broken to save the life of either a Brahmin or a cow.<sup>7</sup>

The state here, easily, passed a judgement on the 'essential', 'illogical' religiosity of every Hindu. The State also intervened in its

capacity as the legislator, for instance by passing the Age of Consent Act in 1892. The services of the State in Punjab, were also often evoked to condemn one of the groups as being indecent, immoral or obscene. The Aryas were a special target,

The *Victoria Paper* (Sialkot) of the 20th December, 1889, highly eulogizes the action of Sir James Lyall in ordering the expulsion of six Arya students from the Lahore Central Training College for publishing an obscene pamphlet. The writer is unable to agree with the *Arya Patrika* that His Honour should reconsider his order, and thinks that *the Punjab Government would be neglecting its duty if it allowed such scandalous conduct on the part of educated natives to pass unnoticed.* (emphasis mine)<sup>8</sup>

The issues that led to heated exchanges between various groups were manifold. The eclectic and universalist Brahmo ideals against the particularist and unstinted devotion of the Aryas to the *Vedas*, the idolatrous Sanatanis viciously attacked by the Aryas, and the Sanatanis in turn attacking the Aryas for being unfaithful to their principles. The Dev Dharmis who pursued similar social reforms as the Aryas, accused the latter of, again, not practising what they preached. For example, one of their tracts wrote of the Aryas,

The spirit of exclusiveness in the Arya Samaj is not due so much to its blind advocacy of the doctrine of the infallibility of any particular books, as to the tenacity with which it clings to *caste prejudices.* (emphasis theirs)<sup>9</sup>

Vegetarianism—non-vegetarianism, idol-worship—atheism—polytheism, kine-killing—cow-worshipping etc. were all part and parcel of the new issues which were debated, and which contributed towards the creation of a new morality. Another important aspect noticed amongst middle classes was an attack on popular culture and an attempt to reform it.<sup>10</sup> A typical example of this can be seen in the report of the newspaper *Wakil*, published from Amritsar, on 2nd April 1900, which condemned the manner in which the *Holi* festival was celebrated,

... the celebration of the festival in Lahore was not only marked by the singing of extremely indecent songs, but the sight of rival masquerades facing each other in Adam's dress in the presence of hundreds of women was also a common one on the occasion. No one, however, interfered with the perpetrators of these atrocities; and this in the capital of a Province, the Government of which recently caused books worth thousands of rupees to be destroyed on the mere suspicion of their contents being obscene.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the traditions maintained by women were also attacked like wedding songs, mourning lamentation (*siyapa*) etc. which were deemed

to be either 'immoral', or for the Aryas, not in the spirit of *Vedas* or the *Satyarth Prakash*.

The issue that generated the maximum amount of heat was the 'women's question'. There were numerous debates on issues of marriage, the age of marriage, child-marriage, widow-remarriage etc. Why was it that it was this question upon which depended the standard of morality of sect, community, nation? Why was there such a persistent desire to create the epitome of the moral woman? The answer to this question is complex and difficult to work out, but some strands that must go into an answer may be identified.

First, and most obviously, it was because here, the colonized peoples of Punjab felt the contempt of the colonizing power. The superior morality, integrity, and sense of justice of the colonizing power were evident, it was repeatedly claimed, in their better treatment of their women. The manner in which the colonized people (men) treated their women was in marked contrast to this 'civilized' behaviour. To give a typical example of the comparisons that were made:

... the Missionaries were the pioneers of civilization in India. It was through the exertion of missionaries like Dr Duff that the Government was led to inaugurate a policy of liberal education. The Missionaries were the first to open the eyes of the Hindus towards their pernicious social customs. What was the condition of the people before the Gospel was preached in India? Human lives were sacrificed under the wheel of Juggernath's car and women burnt on the funeral piles of their husbands'. Women were sometimes buried alive to the neck, so that a cruel Brahmin might get a chance of strangling them to death. Infanticide was prevalent in some parts of the country. . . . It is the teachings of Christianity which have produced reformers in the midst of Hindus.<sup>12</sup>

This was a standard critique worked out by the colonizing state, applicable to almost any part of India

Closely associated with the problem of 'treatment of women' was that of the extent of liberty and freedom that they enjoyed. The western woman was portrayed as self-conscious and freely choosing her life-style, while the Indian was declared to be stifled within the *parda*, and the compound of her house. But the liberty of women was a problematical question for the British as well as for the peoples that they colonized. The colonized peoples ambivalent attitude towards the emancipation of women, is one of the aspects that stands out in the debates of the period in Punjab discussed here. As already pointed out, emancipation of women was not sought, and therefore was not the issue. That some of these reforms being advocated for women, might actually lead in that direction, in itself made those reforms problematic; and thus, an issue of further debate.



The British, through their particular system of compiling knowledge, and the intense study of the 'native societies' that they undertook, not only created a sense of inadequacy amongst the Indians in their 'barbarity' towards women, but also sought to emphasize 'inherent' and 'intrinsic' divisions amongst them. The truisms of the Raj were numerous, and we can give only a few examples.

As is well known, the Hindus are *less prolific than the Muhammadans*, Buddhists and Animists, and other communities owing mainly to their *social customs of early marriage and compulsory widowhood*. Girls are commonly married long before they reach maturity to men who may be much older than themselves, and a very large proportion of them lose their husbands while they are still of child-bearing age, or even before they have attained it. (emphasis mine)<sup>13</sup>

The divisions between Hindus and Muslims here, were not just of religion, but in the attitude of each towards women. We can well imagine why issues pertaining to women became central to the self-definition of various sects and communities. Again, commenting upon the custom of child-marriage, the Census of 1901 for the North-West provinces and Oudh remarks,

According to orthodox Hindu view it arose as a means of preventing immorality, and there is nothing improbable in the view that this has contributed to make early marriage more prevalent.

It then goes on to discuss the question of climate and early puberty in temperate areas, putting the 'Hindus' at a distinct disadvantage.

The effects of climate must also be considered. Caesar noticed that Gauls believed that those children in whom puberty was delayed were the stronger, and also held sexual intercourse by a man before the age of 20 to be disgraceful . . .

And finally, the figures for child-marriages in these provinces are presented, clinching the issue of the inferiority of the Hindus.

. . . . no fewer than 17,899 males and 26,686 (females) were married before they had reached the age of five, the great majority of these being Hindus.<sup>14</sup>

The child-marrying Hindus were thereby placed in an antagonistic relationship with the Muslims and were made to feel defensive in relation to the British. This question of the allegedly faster growth of Muslims, and its supposed association with the prevalence of child-marriage among Hindus was just one of the questions that constantly agitated the mind of the Aryas.

In fact, so taken in were the British themselves by their truisms, that they often presented material which was contradictory in

character, without ever questioning their basic assumptions. The Punjab Census of 1891 furnishes a good example. Writing on child-marriage, it comments,

... It is *primarily a Hindu practice* and is found most strongly developed in districts where Hinduism is the prevailing religion; and in the province it is much more common among the Hindus than among Muslmans. *But the early marriage of girls has now become a matter more of custom than of religion, and the Musalmans in Hindu districts are nearly as much addicted to it as the Hindus, while among Hindus in Musalman districts it is almost as rare as among the Musalmans.* (emphasis mine)<sup>15</sup>

Regional distinctions were secondary despite evidence to the contrary, to the 'essential' difference between a Hindu and a Muslim.

The Census of 1931 overturned many of the hitherto unquestioned assumptions, leaving the imperial gazetteers looking for lame excuses,

The Jains and the Muslims have the lowest number of children born. *This result will cause surprise so far as the Muslims are concerned, as they are well-known to be fairly prolific.* This result, which is not confined to a few areas, can be explained only by the fact that Muslims who are comparatively more ignorant forget some of their children may have (been) lost ... (emphasis mine)<sup>16</sup>

The colonial state here seemed to be shocked at its own exposition of an assumed truth of multiplying Muslims. It tried to take refuge in another, cliché of an ignorant Muslim to validate its earlier assumptions. However, it sounded utterly ludicrous in giving that explanation. And again, the notion that Hindus were weaklings because they were born of child-mothers, a myth that also shaped Arya Samajis attitude towards women quite fundamentally, was dislodged -

We find *wives married below 12 have a higher proportion of children surviving than those married at higher ages.* Is the greater survival rate among the children born to young mothers due to the weeding out of the weaker mothers as a result of early child-bearing or to some physiological cause, which determines that children born in early ages should be more hardy? (emphasis mine)<sup>17</sup>

But a questioning of at least some of the colonial state's assumptions (others, like the myth of the multiplying Muslims was to remain unchallenged) was to come later, when the foundations of the Raj itself were being threatened by a powerful nationalist movement. Meanwhile, propagation of these myths by the Raj, created an atmosphere, where the perception of the differences between the Hindus and Muslims were highlighted. It also pushed the woman's question at the centre-stage, setting the tone for its debate.

Such a scathing critique of the situation of women in India, acquired a special piquancy in the case of Punjab. And the case of Punjab will help to indicate a second reason why the question of women became so central in colonial India. Punjabi society deemed its honour to lie in controlling the sexuality of its women, more so daughters and widows: hence the new questions regarding women just had to be tackled. Numerous Punjabi proverbs and folk-songs testify to this. The problematic unmarried daughter, whose morality was always in question is depicted in the following proverbs:

'An indebted father, and the one with a daughter are not happy' or,  
'A spendthrift son, a gossipy daughter-in-law, an immoral daughter, are lost causes, just like the thread broken from the spindle.'

Punjabi society like the rest of India, greatly prized the virginity of its unmarried daughters. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, writing about the present Pakistani society, capture the importance of a woman's chastity very well for the Punjabis,

... the entire social fabric of Pakistani society seems to be woven around a woman's chastity. The slightest misbehaviour on the part of a woman results in dishonour for her family (her own honour is of secondary importance). All misbehaviour relates to sexual misbehaviour.<sup>19</sup>

Speaking of the Punjab of the nineteenth century and its customs of marriage, Prakash Tandon writes,

If the boy's family came to suspect that the girl's parents had not taken enough care to guard her modesty, or if there was the smallest suspicion that the girl was immodest herself, the betrothal would immediately be broken off. Such girls brought shame upon their families.<sup>20</sup>

Though Punjabi folk-tales and folk-songs are full of references to illicit love between a daughter-in-law and a father-in-law, or between a daughter-in-law and her *devar* (i.e., husband's younger brother), once widowed, a woman was meant to de-sexualize herself. To quote Prakash Tandon once again,

Young widows were ... a great problem, for while people would not accept remarriage at any cost, they did not know what to do with them. Whether a widow stayed with her own or her husband's parents, she was a burden ... she was forbidden to dress and eat well, to share the family's festivities and joys, and often she was an unpaid servant in the house, without the freedom to leave.<sup>21</sup>

Shrimati Ram Rati Gahi, recollecting the time she became a widow, at the age of 27 years, said this about the status of widows.

A widow must work . . . she must not go out . . . must not wear nice clothes, must not go out. I could not move out except to listen to *katha* started by the *Sanatani Istri Sabha*. Anyone who became friendly to me was sent out of the house by my mother-in-law.<sup>22</sup>

A society so careful about guarding women's sexuality, reacted almost violently when the question was brought out of wraps by the State as well as by the reformers like Dayananda Saraswati (even if the issue was discussed only to lay a different set of rules for utilising or being vigilant about sexuality).

The various reformist groups in Punjab were caught between protecting their honour as Punjabis and in the eyes of their 'traditional' society, and doing so while facing the barrage of criticism from colonial officials and observers. And many were caught between being true 'nationalists' which required a protection of what was seen to be 'traditional', and being 'modernists' and reformers which 'nationalism' also required. Women became the ground upon which these extremely complex issues came to be debated and contested.

It was because the honour of Punjabi society was seen to depend upon their women that women were perceived to be an especially vulnerable part of the society. Hence attacks on, and erosion of the Punjabi society became easier from this soft area. The task of tackling women's issues, thereby, acquired a special urgency. The Christian Missionaries, for example, were seen to be most active among women, and through this weak spot in Punjabi society, threatening its very existence. This was also because women were viewed as ignorant, and perhaps, intrinsically immoral. The *Arya Gazette* of 28th April 1898, wrote with a note of desperation.

Christian Missionary schools for girls are far more injurious to us than those for boys. Our girls know nothing of their (own) religion, and the readers can form an idea of the effect which the preaching of real or spurious ladies, coupled with presents of dolls, pictures and little books, can produce on their minds. All of us raise an outcry whenever a married girl is abducted from her home through the instrumentality of these very kind and devout ladies. We are blind and create trouble for ourselves by giving our children into the hands of our enemies . . . I am not against female education. On the contrary, I hold that an educated and religious wife can prove an invaluable help to her husband. But I consider it foolish to give our girls poisoned bread to eat . . .<sup>23</sup>

The dilemma of the reformers is well illustrated here. They wanted reforms for women, but only so far as they increased the prestige of the community. Yet by changing the life of women even in a limited way,

reformers could threaten the established patriarchy (seen as 'community'). Here, perhaps, it was seen to be important to educate women just a little, so that they might acquire enough sense not to be 'easy' targets for the Missionaries. Women, however, were not meant to be so educated, that they might threaten the control of the patriarchal community.

Finally, the 'woman problem' assumed its importance, because women were seen to be the begetters of a new generation of men—the creators, in this direct but critical way, of a new nation. Heredity, race, survival of the fittest, the functioning of a perfect body like a machine etc. were propositions that came to be necessarily linked with notions of motherhood. The Aryas of the 1890s retained some of the ideas of Dayananda regarding the construction of the body of a mother; but their ideas were also influenced by those prevailing in Europe. They sought to amalgamate Darwin and Spencer's ideas about heredity with Dayananda's notion of caste purity, *brahmacharya* and marriage of men and women at 25 and 16 respectively. This effort is very well illustrated in two pamphlets that I discuss below—both revealing a general concern for the 'Hindu community' and nation and the manner in which it could survive and become 'manly'.

B. Rama Shastri in 1896 composed a tract entitled *Intermarriage of Hindus with Europeans and other Non-Hindu Ladies*.<sup>24</sup> In this tract, Shastri condemned the Hindus for 'in and in' marriages, i.e., marriages within the same castes and sub-castes, as being productive of weak and degenerate progeny. It was essential to introduce 'new blood' into the Hindu community, and this could be done by taking on wives belonging to the 'superior' nations of Europe and America. The basic patriarchal assumption of Shastri, the importance of 'Hindu' men, taking on 'European' wives to improve the 'Hindu' community is obvious. It was the men who constituted the race, even though women, as Shastri later tried to show, had an important role to play in reproduction. It is important to note here that Dayananda's notion of caste purity was given up in Shastri's tract, but that of 'improving the quality of blood' retained. Just as Dayananda saw the nation as an organism, so did Shastri:

... nations and states are regarded as organisms which subsist by continual renewing its members just as individuals live by continued assimilation and dissemination of molecules.<sup>25</sup>

And while he was like Dayananda, insistent on the maintenance of caste by profession (for example, a 'warrior' marrying only within the same caste), the whole argument of Shastri is based upon a new understanding of the laws of heredity.

It has been firmly established by the researches of Herbert Spencer and other sociologists that the laws which govern the progress and

decline of individuals are exactly similar to those which govern the progress and decline of nations.<sup>26</sup>

And

I have all along supposed the truth of the doctrine of heredity, and have based my conclusions therein.<sup>27</sup>

Shastri rejected the analogy of the 'seed and the earth' on which Dayananda had commented upon and which saw a woman only as a receptacle of the seed.

The analogy is wrong as based upon the ignorance of the laws of biology. Spermatozoon is no more seed than a practical of pollen . . . A woman, plays double part in the formation of the child; she supplies ovum for the formation of a seed and then she nourishes and feeds the seed. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the selection of a new kind of 'healthy' mother started for the perfection of the 'Hindu' race—a woman who could pass the new test of science and heredity to breed the right kind of men. Just as, to use Shastri's analogy,

Lord Oxford crossed his famous stand of greyhounds once with the bull-dog in order to give them courage and perseverance.<sup>29</sup>

So a Hindu male needed to be crossed with the right kind of 'superior' ('bull-dog') female, so that a woman might not transmit her weaknesses on to the new Arya race, but instead give birth to a manly breed. A remodelling and reshaping of woman was on the cards.

This reshaping of woman, so that she might be able to cater to the modern requirements of reproduction of a scientifically perfected race, often boiled down to the rejection of child-marriage and *parda*, and to the introduction of marriage by choice. Dayananda's concepts could, thus, be easily adapted to suit new principles. According to Shastri,

. . . the principal cause and perhaps the only cause of degradation of Hindus has been the inferior condition of their women. The other two causes, namely early marriage and want of choice in marriage are, as it were, consequences of the inferiority of women.<sup>30</sup>

Bawa Chajju Singh, in his tract, 'Brahmacharya versus Child Marriage',<sup>31</sup> expressed a similar opinion.

. . . to what (do) we owe our physical degeneracy and how we can (sic) get rid of it? It is the gift of child-marriage or early marriage.<sup>32</sup>

Bawa Chajju Singh was in the quest for 'a pure and manly race'<sup>33</sup> and to create a body which is,

as a locomotive, sound in every part of its machinery, that can stand the pressure and force of steam,<sup>34</sup>

and one which is composed of,

sheer animal strength and animal energy which gives effect to and carries out the intellectual few and decides the fate of nations.<sup>35</sup>

Obviously the desire to acquire *bahubal* was still present. And as for Shastri, so for Singh, the formula of a 'sound mind in sound body' could be carried through only very scientifically. Singh, unlike Shastri, retained the analogy of the seed and the earth, but the terminology was very scientific.

Just as the agriculturist views scientifically the relation of the seed to the field in which they are to be sown; just as a botanist views scientifically the relation between stamens and pistils; just as an electrician argued scientifically on the relation between positive and negative electricity; just as a physiologist views and examines the different parts of the human body;—exactly in the same way our Aryan ancestors looked upon the relation between man and woman . . . To them woman was merely the soil and man the seed; the woman a pistil, the man a stamen; the woman a positive, the man a negative electricity; the woman a machine for growing and developing, the man for forming and shaping the child.<sup>36</sup>

And though, here, the need for a certain amount of remoulding of the man was also obvious, the ultimate duty was that of the mother in the formation of a perfected race.

This condition of affairs will continue as long as the mother(s) of the nation remain the victims of such a vicious marriage system . . . as long as mothers remain too feeble and too immature to impart strength and vitality to their off-spring, so long will the Indian races lack strength, courage, and hardihood, and the nation will remain weak and dependent.<sup>37</sup>

Infact, physical degeneracy was productive of moral degeneracy too, and thus, women must be prevented from the immoral sensual, early marriage.

'A system of early marriage', says a European doctor, 'panders to sensuality, lowers the standard of health and of morals, degrades the race and tends to perpetuate itself and its attendant evils to all future generation. Such is the law of heredity.'<sup>38</sup>

The saving of women from child-marriage and the practice of *bramacharya* became absolutely essential to have a nation populated by the likes of Gladstone, Socrates and Dayananda,<sup>39</sup> men not only mentally agile, but physically fit too.

Another very important issue of the period, the *Pardah* system was discussed in a similar vein. The effects of *Parda* were seen to be deleterious to the health of not only the woman, but also of the nation to which she would give birth. For example, this was the main objection raised by G.M. Francis in a tract called *Parda System*<sup>40</sup> that he compiled in 1895, and which was published by the Bharat Sewak of Jullundur, an Arya publishing house. Interestingly, Francis, and others who wrote against the *parda* system tried to show that this practice did not in fact originate with the Muhammadans. It was a practice that was in vogue before the Muslim invasion of the country, though Francis conceded that *Islami Burqaposhi* did have some effect on *Hindavi Chunghat*—perhaps in giving it further legitimacy. B. Rama Shastri, quoted above, tried to establish through the study of the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, the existence of *parda* in India before the Muslims, and completely absolved the latter of the blame.

It is a mistake to suppose that *Parda* system, early marriage and other such cruelties to which Hindu women are subjected were introduced in Mohammedan rule, long before that time they fared (sic) the same fate as they do now...<sup>41</sup>

Obviously, the Muslim invasion and its deleterious effect on women of India, an assumption that the nationalist rhetoric would make even a decade later had not yet been worked out completely. Perhaps it was an attempt to forge a Hindu-Muslim cross-communal unity, against the onslaughts of the colonial state, a project that would have fewer adherents in the next century. Shastri, as was the norm, evoked the myth of the 'golden age of the Aryas'<sup>42</sup> one that had been fully worked out, to prove the perfect freedom women enjoyed in the Early Vedic Age, which put them easily at par with the Europeans,

... at one time our ancestors treated their women as their equals. Women used to take part in dinners, sports, wars and other manly engagements. Commenting upon the description of a grand feast at Pindarak given in Harivansa Dr. Rajendra Lall Mitter considering the ancient customs of picnics and feasts observes, 'that one is almost tempted to imagine that the people who took part in them were some sea-kings of Norway or Teuton knights carousing after a fight, and not Hindus.'<sup>43</sup>

Shastri goes on to speak of the better status women enjoyed under the Muslim law, than they did under the law of Manu. But Shastri's was to be increasingly a lone voice, as the differences between the Hindus and Muslims were emphasized, in the nationalist attempt to give Hindus a pure Aryan past.

However, it was G.M. Francis, who brought the real concern as to why women should come out of the *parda* to the fore.



*Burqaposhi, ghunghat* system and seclusion of the women in homes, was harmful, could produce dangerous effects for the strength, nature and honour of the community.<sup>44</sup>

The crux of the issue was that an unfree mother would give birth to a slave race and that would end up with a nation of mice rather than lions. This is an age when the 'power of sword' is still readily touted about.

The nation's mice-faced, afraid and coward children would declare that their unfree mothers gave them birth and brought them up in this manner.<sup>45</sup>

And, that,

everywhere there is a feeling that this nation is without strength, is weak and uncourageous, deprived of physical and mental capabilities, unresolute.<sup>46</sup>

Francis went on to discuss not only the 'immorality' of keeping women in *parda*, but also that the system itself led to creation of an immoral society. For a man, who could not meet his veiled woman openly, would seek the company of prostitutes, and an unsatisfied woman would try to satiate her desires through unsanctioned ways. A woman out of *parda*, was, thus, presented as one capable of improving both the nation and the home, and if she became moral herself, she could certainly better the moral standards of the community. G.M. Francis, finally quoted the *Bharat Sewak* to show that an unveiled European woman was, indeed not immoral.<sup>47</sup>

The claim of G.M. Francis for the morality of a western woman was, infact, not accepted, just as there was no straight forward acceptance of the notion that removal of *parda* would necessarily increase morality, or that a deferment of women's age of marriage would not increase immorality. The *Ataliq-i-Hind* in an issue in June 1892 commented on the immorality of the Europeans as seen in their balls and dances and spoke of the advantages of the *parda* system.

The *Ataliq* calls upon the English nation to restrict the liberty of their women, and thus save the nation from moral degradation.<sup>48</sup>

In a similar report the *Taj-ul-Akhbar* of 16th July 1898, spoke of the immoral western woman because of the absence of the institution of *parda*.

... about 2,000 bastards are born annually in Liverpool; that if the *pardha* system were not in vogue in India, the number of such children would also be on the increase in this country; and that for the most part Europeans alone would be responsible for the result; for when even the men of India cannot protect themselves against

Europeans, what is to be expected of their females? The editor then ridicules the efforts of those who wish to do away with the *Parda* system, and observes, . . . that the emancipation of women has resulted in an increase of immorality in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, many perceived that immorality would be promoted by giving up early marriage. The *Khair-Khawah-i-Kashmir* noted in November 1890,

. . . that if early marriage is abolished . . . the result will be that native women will, like their European sisters, blacken their faces in private before choosing a husband for themselves.<sup>50</sup>

These quotations bring out quite clearly some of the concerns that period regarding the position of women. The morality of women was of prime importance but its parameters were in the process of being drawn up. And the honour and respectable identity of a sect, community, and nation depended upon it. It was in this sphere, in its advocacy of various reforms for women, as we will see, that the Arya Samaj came to be attacked by other sects. And the puritan Arya woman of the next century emerged only after an intense debate about her sexuality and her morals had taken place. Every reform that was envisaged for women was debated on the scale of morality—immortality. Secondly, what was very closely connected with this debate was a fear of the liberated and emancipated women, a fear that perhaps emancipation would mean a subversion of 'tradition', and therefore, a loss of identity. Thirdly, the construction of a moral woman, also needed its counterpart, the immoral woman—and here, a stereotype of a western woman was made, to ensure the unimpeachable morality of an 'Indian' and an 'Aryan' woman.

To start with the last point first. The society of the West was increasingly constructed as an immoral one by the Hindu 'nationalist' writers of this period. The sign of this immorality was the 'liberated' character of its women. Western men did not have control over the sexual behaviour of western women. There was no question of the '*pativrata*' wife, the wife who treated her husband like her God. Parents had no control over the marriage of their offspring, and this resulted in an unbalanced society, where there was no care for the spinsters and the ugly. I give below some examples of the stereotype that was built up. The *Akhbar-i-Am* of 15th January 1898 commented, in the course of countering an attack on the morality of Indian women.

As a matter of fact, European women are inferior to Indian women in modesty, good manners, fidelity & c. Indeed the honour (*izzat*) and manners of Indian dancing girls are not opposed to those of European ladies, while Indian prostitutes are more modest than American women. . . .<sup>51</sup>

The *Kaisar-il-Akhbar* in March 1891, writing against the passage of the Age of Consent Bill stated,

It is a serious mistake to think that the natives of India treat their women like savages. They only asks them to perform their household duties, whereas in England women have not only to work hard during the day to earn their livelihood, but are also compelled to prostitute themselves at night; and that in consequence of their being allowed to choose husbands for themselves, 38 percent of the girls are compelled to remain unmarried and lead an immoral life.<sup>52</sup>

The writer declared himself to be in favour of social reforms, but did not favour the idea of too much liberty being given to women. Commenting on the controversy started by the disparaging comments of a Col. Temple against Indian women, the Sat Dharm Pracharak wrote similarly,

Native women can learn much from their sisters in the West, and the latter may with advantage sit at the feet of the former for more than one thing. And one of the lessons which the European lady should learn from the women of this country is to share her husband's trials and anxieties, and not to flee to the pleasures of Simla leaving him to sweat in the plains. Were she to lay this lesson to heart, duels and divorce cases would not be so frequent among Europeans, and thousands of homes would be converted to so many paradises on earth.<sup>53</sup>

The 'western woman' was all that the Indian woman, it was feared, would be, if 'liberated'. Thus, the constant anxiety of even those who favoured reforms for women, the anxiety, e.g. that the DAV group of the Arya-Samaj and its leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai showed when confronted with the idea of higher education for women. As Madhu Kishwar<sup>54</sup> has pointed out, there was hardly any concern for economic independence of women. This was, indeed, feared as tantamount to overturning patriarchy. The whole debate around reforms was whether they enhanced or subverted the identity of a particular group. Even the advocates of reforms were careful in spelling out their abhorrence to the idea of westernization. For example, G.M. Francis, while claiming that unveiled European women were not immoral, was quick to point out,

lest (I) be misinterpreted, I would like to state, I have no desire to see the women of Punjab and India, as counterparts of European ladies, infact, I view their uncurbed freedom with distaste, their spendthrift habits which make their husbands bankrupt, their slavery to fashions, their unrestrained mixing with strangers . . . I see all this as extremely bad. . . <sup>55</sup>

Europeanization, emancipation, liberation of women were terms that were often conflated and in most instances unequivocally rejected.

The *Kaisar-ul-akhbar* . . . referring to a case in which a European named King was assaulted by his wife in Calcutta, observes that the time is not distant when native ladies will treat their husbands in a similar fashion.<sup>56</sup>

The intervention of the state in questions related to women and the community made things infinitely worse. The *Koh-i-Nur* reported in 1892 that,

. . . the Hindu community is awaiting with considerable anxiety the result of the appeal to the High Court in the case in which Shrimati, a Hindu lady, has applied for the dissolution of her marriage, on the grounds that it was contracted while she was a minor. This case, which is the first of its kind ever instituted in India, is, in the opinion of the *Koh-i-Nur*, the result of the undue liberty allowed to women and of the education imparted to them. The *Koh-i-Nur* does not advocate early marriage, but considers that no marriage should be declared null on the ground that it took place before the contracting parties, or one of them, had attained his or her majority.<sup>57</sup>

The dilemma of instituting reforms, and yet fearing its possible consequences becomes quite apparent. Women ought to change only to the extent that the men wish them to change, and no further. Prakash Tandon's fond memory of his mother, in fact, depicts a woman who did just that.

After the short experiment at westernizing her father must have left mother alone, but she kept pace with his development, though at her own distance and without letting go anything she cherished. Generally speaking, throughout the process of change, our women showed enough attachment to tradition to prevent the change from swamping old values. Our fathers changed rapidly, our mothers slowly, and between them my generation managed to learn the new without entirely forgetting the old.<sup>58</sup>

'Changing' while preserving 'tradition' was what the women were expected to do. What 'tradition' was and what the 'change' that could be allowed was what male reformers were debating and formulating.

It was the Arya Samaj's novel definition of 'tradition' that came to be scathingly attacked by groups like the Sanatanis and Brahmos, by other communities, and even by the state. For their 'tradition', it was feared would subvert morals and thereby erode the foundations of social life: Dayananda's advocacy of a marriage in which the consent of the boy and the girl was sought, their photos and diaries exchanged by their masters and shown to the concerned parties, was strongly

criticized. However, what was deemed to be absolutely scandalous was his discussion of the subject of sexuality—the manner in which he expected the couple to copulate to produce 'superior' children. A society that cherished chastity, yet where discussion of sexuality was taboo, could not swallow Dayananda's frankness on the subject.

Ganga Bishan, alias Buddhu Ram, the managing secretary of the *Dharma Rakshak Sabha*, Peshawar, in 1889 wrote a pamphlet entitled *Dayanandi Shadi*<sup>59</sup> in which he freely abused Dayananda of being immoral himself and therefore advocating immorality. He variously refers to Dayananda as *Kokacharya* teaching *Kokshastra* to his disciples, as a voyeuristic, sensuous and lascivious person out to open hotels of love and trade in Dayananda's interpretation of 'tradition' was questioned, e.g., the author conceded that 'Brahma' form of marriage was the best, but goes on to say that the *Manu Smriti* nowhere spoke about the manner described by Dayananda.

It is with a view to deceiving the readers that Babaji has referred to the said principle of *Manu Smriti*, because Manuji never meant that marriages should take place with the help of photographs . . .  
60

What really disturbed Buddhu Ram was the way in which Dayananda was apparently exposing young unmarried women to the gaze of the public, a threat to the very honour of Punjabi society. Instead of exchanging photographs, Buddhu Ram notes, parents may as well make their daughter sit in brothels, for all to view them.<sup>61</sup> Sarcastically, Buddhu Ram remarks,

His disciples are praising his masculine virtues. But I am amazed at his arrangements for the display of women!<sup>62</sup>

Such 'display of women' was nothing more than a minor concession that Dayananda allowed to give women a small say in making a choice for their marriage. For Dayananda the objective was a better marriage, congenial for a better familial life, without questioning of the patriarchal structure of the family. For Buddhu Ram, trying to protect a threatened kinship and family structure, even such a concession amounted to subversion. Commenting on the 'free-will' of the couple involved in the question of marriage, Buddhu Ram responded almost hysterically that this was something unheard of in Hindu society:

... nobody may have heard of it in the Hindu Samaj except perhaps (some) in non-Hindu communities . . . although these may be observed in the animal world, just like a young bitch and a dog get physically involved without the consent of their parents. But, a human child may never exercise such a free will. It is neither

permitted by wisdom nor the *dharmashastras*. . . in fact, a woman can never be independent in any of the three stages (*awasthas*). . .<sup>63</sup>

Again, criticizing the marriage ceremony and that of consummation noted by Dayananda, Buddhu Ram accused him of having,

indulged in such wild fantasies as may lead to further demoralization of society.<sup>64</sup>

Dayananda's specific concern with the reproduction of superior children for the Arya nation and maintenance of caste morality in questions of marriage, led him to a discussion of the question of sexuality, however clinically he tried to do it. This was strongly disapproved of by contemporary middle class Punjabi society, and the Arya Samaj was criticized for defending such a practice. That the Arya Samajis themselves did not accept in toto all that the Swami wrote emerges as we move towards the twentieth century. Here is the *Sat Dharm Pracharak*, an Arya publication accusing the *Puranas* for obscenity (an accusation that the others made against the *Satyarth Prakash*). Women's 'basic' sensuous nature is again assumed, and necessity to curb and control it is implied.

The *Sat Dharm Pracharak* . . . of the 5th May 1899, remarks that if the Police Authorities were to go through the translation of the *Puranas*, several editions of which have been issued from the Nawal Kishore Press of Lucknow, they would feel no hesitation in pronouncing them obscene. If, therefore, the Hindus wish to see the numbers of their society tread the path of virtue morality they should lose no time in discarding these books. Otherwise the day is not distant when, under the pernicious teachings of the *Puranas*, the little morality the Hindu females now possess will vanish. (emphasis mine)<sup>65</sup>

It was the issue of widow-remarriage, and more so of *Niyog* or levirate marriage, that was really problematical for the Arya Samajis and drew a volley of abuse from most quarters. The Arya Samajis publicly advocated the cause of widow-remarriage. The catch was that the Swami had forbidden remarriage for the twice-born in the *Satyarth Prakash*, advocated instead the doctrine of *niyoga* for (twice-born) widows and widowers. He had approved of marriage only between virgin girls and boys. However, in advocating remarriage for widows, the Arya Samajis were more in line with a general debate on the question of the 'plight of widows' in Punjab, and other parts of the country. The Census figures showing an increase in the number of child widows over the years, and a feeling that such women were often pushed into prostitution, an index of increasing 'immorality' ensured that Aryas take a position on this question. So Aryas could at times face uncomfortable questions,

... the *Vedas*, as interpreted by Swami Dayananda, *do not allow re-marriage of widows*. How can then our Arya brethren dare be a party in the celebration of widow re-marriages? They can either practice *Brahmacharya* or enter into *niyog* connections. (emphasis his) <sup>66</sup>

However, the Arya Samajis tried to retain the spirit of the *Satyarth Prakash* and encouraged re-marriage between widows and widowers. There was, of course, disapproval of this concept of remarriage from orthodox quarters. For example,

The *Nanak Prakash* . . . for the month of July, publishes some verses condemning the re-marriage of widows on the ground that giving away of a woman in marriage is *dan* (an act of charity), and that a *dan* once made cannot be taken back according to Hindu religion.<sup>67</sup>

But the Arya Samajis tried hard to overcome this kind of criticism and succeeded to a little extent. Though widow remarriage never became very common in Punjab, there were instances of it, very often because of the efforts of the Arya Samajis. For example, the 1901 census for Punjab reported that for the Aryas,

the legality of remarriage of widows is insisted on, and during the year 1901, accounts of two such marriages in these provinces was (sic) published, one being in a Brahmin, and the other in an Agarwala family.<sup>68</sup>

More importantly, Aryas at times approached the problem of widows as that of suppressed sexuality, which would raise its head in the spread of immoral practices. The *Sat Dharm Pracharak* of 8th October 1897, e.g., spoke in strong terms against the prohibition of widow-remarriage.

There are no less than thirty thousand widows between the age of 1 and 19 in Punjab, to say nothing of the whole of India, which must contain several lacs of such widows. The sighs and groans of these wretched beings has proved the ruin of the country, but the hard-hearted Hindus are callous to their sufferings. The Hindus see also that *some of their widows commit adultery and abortion, but their stony hearts do not melt*. (emphasis mine)<sup>69</sup>

again, the *Rahbar-i-Hind* in December 1890 made a strong appeal to the government to introduce laws on various issues of social reform, including widow-remarriage. It asked the government to punish those parents who stopped women from re-marrying.

That in all cases of abortion by widows enquiries should be made as to whether the parents prevented their daughters from re-marrying, and, if so, they should be severely punished.<sup>70</sup>

While marriage could legitimize the whole question of wanton sexuality, *niyog* was another issue altogether.

The issue of *niyog* aroused the ire of almost all middle class sects which quite often resorted to seeking the verdict of the state to condemn it as obscene and incomprehensible in any civilized society. The Aryas initially defended it with enthusiasm, backed with scientific explanations and parallels drawn from different religious texts. But they did ultimately become defensive about it, perhaps because a good number of Aryas themselves did not have conviction about the doctrine. And finally, the doctrine itself was to disappear from Arya literature and rhetoric. This was also a move from a discussion of the question of sexuality, however obscure or guarded that discussion, to utter silence on this question: 'carnal passions', supposedly intrinsic to women, were to give way to her sublime motherhood functions. Let us examine the various aspects of this debate.

One of the first stringent critiques of the doctrine of *niyog* was presented by Rev. T. Williams who condemned Dayananda for proposing such an 'astounding' and 'monstrous' doctrine, and more so for ascribing it to the *Rig Veda*. However, the manner in which T. Williams presented the case, it also came out as an indictment against Hinduism.

Now, I do not mean to say that there is no indecency in the *Rig Veda*, for there is, as I can show, but it was left for Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, to show that the *Rig Veda* actually enjoins the grossly immoral doctrine that a woman should betake herself to some other married man for cohabitation if her own husband be impotent?<sup>71</sup>

And again,

I do not mean to say . . . that the Hindus hear this doctrine for the first time from the Dayanandis, for it is notorious that as a matter of practice the thing has been done by the Hindus for centuries. Use is made in this way of the Panday *Brahmans* at Allahabad . . . the Mahajans of Vellabhacharya Sect . . . Jaina marriage rites.<sup>72</sup>

T. Williams tried to show through the dialogue between *Yama* and *Yami* in the *Rig Veda* that it was not a husband asking his wife to take on another man rather,

*the speaker is a brother, and the woman he speaks to is that brother's sister!!! (emphasis his)*<sup>73</sup>

This, in fact, was viewed as a further condemnation of Hinduism, which was described as uncontrollably sensuous.

This was certainly the manner in which Pt. Gurudutta Vidyarthi, an outstanding Arya scholar, well-versed in the *Vedas*, saw William's



attack. He defended the doctrine of *niyog* vehemently. For Gurudutta, marriage was scientific and rational, like the coming together of heat and light and he compared 'pure', 'truthful', 'rational', 'natural', 'spiritual' and 'physiological marriage with 'compulsatory' (sic), 'impulsive', 'formal' and 'beastly' marriage. And marriage and *niyog* were associated with reproduction—children to be born of a 'willful, appreciative, conscientious consociations (sic) of their parents'.<sup>74</sup> He made a thorough study of *Vedas* proving that *Yama* and *Yami* were, infact, husband and wife speaking with each other, giving examples from *Nirukta* and *Katyayana* and refuting Williams brilliantly. Gurudutta's clinical scientific idiom, dismissed the notion of sensuous Indians, establishing their superior moral standards. Gurudutta, also went on to defend Hinduism by giving examples from the Bible which pointed towards the prevalence of similar customs therein.<sup>75</sup>

Like Gurudutta, a number of other Aryas also resorted to 'scientific' explanations, which underplayed the whole question of sexuality, and gave examples from varied religious texts, trying to establish the universalism of the practice.<sup>76</sup>

*Niyog* was proclaimed as both moral and scientific and essential for the purpose of reproduction.

Despite this 'scientism' of *niyog* that the Aryas tried to establish, the doctrine attracted widespread and severe criticism, and led to a division of ranks among the Arya Samajis themselves. For it was viewed as being completely subversive of all morality, and therefore threatening the very existence of Hindu society, as turning the social norms completely upside-down, and making women, whose standards of morality were already low, susceptible to complete degeneration.

Ruchi Ram Sahni, a leading Brahmo of Lahore, composed a tract against *niyog* because he feared that such a doctrine,

if largely practiced, is, in my opinion sure to lead to a considerable dislocation in the social life of the Hindus.<sup>77</sup>

And again,

I consider the teachings of the Arya Samaj, in respect to the doctrine of *Niyoga & c.*, and fraught with danger to the future moral well-being of my country men...<sup>78</sup>

Sahni felt that giving such an immoral practice the sanction of the *Vedas* was, infact, giving sanction to the immoral elements of the society. What really scared him was the adherence the doctrine was getting from the Aryas.

I had long been under the impression that the number of Arya gentlemen having a sincere belief in the doctrine of *Niyoga* was comparatively small, and that the vast majority of the members were not acquainted with the real nature of it at all. In this I was

grievously mistaken, and it has been, I confess, a most disagreeable surprise to me to learn, during the past few months, that, of late, the doctrine has been rapidly gaining ground.<sup>79</sup>

Such fears amongst the people were compounded, when the Aryas seemed to have become brazen about it.

The *Hakam* . . . reproduces a notice on *Nayog* (sic) from the *Arya Gazette* . . . dated 12th April 1900. The notice is to the effect that a friend of the publisher of the notice being a staunch Arya-Samajist of 40 years of age and having no children from his own wife, who is ill, is desirous of entering into *Nayog* according to the injunctions of Swami Dayanandaji, with a widow or with a woman who has got no children by her own husband. If in the family of an Arya-Samajist, care of Kalu Ram, Musafir, Storekeeper, Military Works Service, Meean Meer.<sup>80</sup>

Such brazenness was shocking, and though Sahni confessed,

Only one or two instances have come to my personal knowledge of gentlemen who have expressed their willingness to carry out the doctrine into practice, if an opportunity presents itself,<sup>81</sup>

what he feared was that Hinduism which he characterized as *elastic and compromising* (emphasis his)<sup>82</sup> would soon sprout,

a sect of *niyogists* amongst us, prepared, not only to profess and preach the doctrine, but to practise it openly as well.<sup>83</sup>

Most shocking of all was the utter ridicule that patriarchy would be subjected to because of this doctrine.

In the name of Religion and Morality, are such teachings to be allowed to pass unchallenged? . . . Can any clear minded man . . . support the idea of a woman being the mother of ten children by as many men, all of whom might be alive at the same time, and still be considered a *respectable* woman? (emphasis his)<sup>84</sup>

That women were bound to become immoral, thereby threatening patriarchal control,

. . . what effect the teaching of the *Satyarath Parkash* (sic) produces on the pupils in the girls schools, when the system of *Nayog* (sic) is explained and its merits shown to them? Does not such teaching inflame the passions of unmarried girls?<sup>85</sup>

Critique of the doctrine of *niyog* was not restricted to the Hindu community itself. It came from other communities too. They Aryas had aroused the anger of other communities by issuing tirades against them at frequent intervals—a practice started by the Swami himself. For example, at the time of the death of Pt. Lekh Ram, a well-known Arya

preacher, who was murdered allegedly by a Muslim pretending to convert to the Arya faith, the *Akhbar-i-Am*, a daily from Lahore, while expressing regret over the incident, also noted,

the professors of every religion have a right to point out the superiority of their own creed, but the Arya Samaj has hit upon the novel method of abusing other religions.<sup>86</sup>

In fact, Pt. Lekh Ram and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Kadian kept up a war of words over a long time, the latter even supposedly having predicted the death of the former.<sup>87</sup> *Niyog* was one of the issues that the Mirza had picked up to expose the immorality of the Aryas, their sensuous creed, and the language used was very abusive. The *Alhakam* of Kadian, in its long-standing debate with the Salt Dharm Pracharak, accused the latter of propagating the,

shameless and indecent doctrine of *niyog*, under which a wife is allowed to cohabit with strangers for the sake of begetting children,<sup>88</sup>

and went on to claim that,

it was the Mirza who pointed out that if this doctrine were true (that of transmigration of souls), it was quite possible for a man to marry his own mother or sister because those who believe that the doctrine have no means of knowing into whose body the soul of their mother or sister has migrated. Suppose a man's body entered the body of a dog after his death, and that of his mother or sister that of a slut, there would be nothing to prevent the latter having intercourse with the former...<sup>89</sup>

There almost seemed to be a voyeuristic pleasure in describing *niyog*, e.g., the *Anwar-ul-Islam*, a daily published from Sialkot remarked,

that before a shameless creature and a cuckold accepts the offer made by the *birajdata* (giver of semen) and is prepared to send his beloved wife to bed with a stranger, it should be settled whether she is to live in the house of the *birajdata* or the latter in her house. In the former case the husband will remain a widower and will be at a loss to know how to satisfy his carnal passions. Will he resort to some other woman? In the case of the *birajdata* living in the house of the woman, her husband and he will both enjoy her in the same time and the same room.<sup>90</sup>

The condemnation came from the colonial regime too. Early in 1892, a pamphlet had emerged ridiculing Aryas doctrine like the *niyoga*. The Aryas had filed a complaint against it in the court of the local Assistant Commissioner. However, his verdict went against them.

Of these doctrines and teachings some are certainly against the ideas of morality to any man of common sense . . . It cannot be denied that there is instruction in the art of cohabitation in the *Satyarth Prakash* . . . The complainant himself admits that he believes in the doctrine allowing sexual intercourse between a married woman and another married man while her own husband is alive. This practice is not doubt adultery.<sup>91</sup>

Faced with such relentless criticism the Aryas became defensive. The Aryas were being exposed as immoral because of the 'immoral' practices they allowed their women. An unrespectable woman could mean the loss of respect of an Arya man. Their defense of *niyog* started wavering, and though they used the same arguments that Dayananda did, they lacked conviction.

The *Arya Musafir Magazine* . . . says that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's objection, that the entering into *Nayog* of a married woman owing to her husband being impotent is an insult to civilization, must be regarded as merely an appeal to human prejudices. The Mirza should know that, in the first place, *it is not obligatory on such a woman to perform Nayog*, and that, in the next, entering into *Nayog* in the prescribed manner has nothing dishonourable about it. (emphasis mine)<sup>92</sup>

That an Arya woman was not obliged to perform *niyog* was being conceded, a concession to the pressure building up against the doctrine. The Aryas also tried to expose the immoralities of others. On Guru Piara writing in the *Sat Dharm Pracharak* accused the Muslims and the Christians of being incestuous.

Incestuous marriages can take place only among those who believe that mankind have descended from the same common parents and still marry among themselves . . .<sup>93</sup>

However, the Aryas finally abandoned the doctrine. The doctrine itself was never practised, except by a few, but even in print its defense was given up by Arya Samaj spokes persons.

It would appear that this doctrine of *niyog* was too much opposed to the old Punjabi ethic, as also the new morality under construction, to ever have been practicable. But why did the Aryas defend it so staunchly for such a long time? Because in the heyday of scienticism and rationality, *niyog* could be explained as scientific and rational? Or was it because the need to populate the nation with Arya children had seemed so strong that social constraints had to be remoulded? Ruchi Ram Sahni, perhaps, came fairly close to the truth when he noted, that abandoning the doctrine of *niyog* would mean abandoning the idea of the infallibility of the *Vedas*.

I think in declaring the *Vedas* to be the repositories of all knowledge, and committing themselves to accept all that is contained in them, the Arya Samajists have undertaken to execute a large order.<sup>94</sup>

To concede that the *Vedas* were after all fallible, would have threatened the very basic foundation of Arya ideology and hence the problem.

*Niyog*, however, was given up and some Aryas, also gave up the notion of the infallibility of the *Vedas*. The Arya woman's puritanism could not be questioned in the generations to come. Mrs. Vidya Malik, born in 1909 in an Arya Samaji family, and a practising Arya Samaji herself, married at the age of 16 to another, had this to say about *niyog*,

Arya Samajis were puritans . . . sex was a taboo subject. There was much more openness about it in the Sanatan Dharma. I did not even know about *niyog* till very late. They would not even talk of it. It must have been very embarrassing . . . widow remarriages did take place. People did not even know of *niyog*.<sup>95</sup>

It was ironical that in spite of its humourless, stern and puritanical tone, the *Satyarth Prakash* still brought the charge of immorality on the Aryas and on Swami Dayananda Saraswati himself. It cannot be seen as an indictment of the character of either the Swami or the Arya Samaj, rather it must be viewed as part of the problem of the morality of women that agitated the Punjabis of 1890s. The construction of the moral woman was what the new concerns of the urban Punjabis demanded. This could be achieved only after debating what was immoral, so that could be suppressed or eliminated. This was trajectory from the 'traditional' and partially immoral' (sexually loaded and dangerous) woman to a 'new' 'traditional-moral' woman. The patriarchal control was complete—but it did give some new openings to women. Education, politicization to an extent, a bettering of the conditions of widows were also a part of the same process, a process of creating new identities and finding new meanings for life.

The debates of the 1890s finally led to the building up the image of the woman who was to symbolize Indian spirituality and morality, the 'Mother India'. Nuances of her important characteristics are already visible here—she was traditional, 'moral', '*patrioratta*' (devoted to her husband), 'mother' (of a manly race). And she signified a superior morality to that of the western woman, who came to represent the corrupt and material western society. The Punjabi woman of the coming generations was meant to internalize and imbibe these characteristics of the 'Aryan' woman. This imagery was also to be used imaginatively by the Arya Samajis in the first quarter of the next century—as Lajpat Rai would do effectively. From defining the image

of a community to doing the same for the nation, women were used as symbol for the varied concerns of men.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol XVI; North-West Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report by R. Burn (Allahabad, Govt. Press, 1902), p. 69.
2. This aspect of the Arya Samaj has been discussed at length in the book—Kenneth W. Jones, 1989, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab*, Manohar, Delhi.
3. *The Census of India*, 1901, op. cit, p. 69.
4. Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth-Century Agenda and Its Implications*, K.P. Bagchi and Co., Calcutta, 1988.
5. This has been shown by Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986.
6. Prakash Tandon, *Punjabi Century 1857–1947*, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 18.
7. *The Census of India*, 1901, op. cit, p. 75.
8. *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers published in the Punjab*, Vol II, No. 1, January 1990.
9. Jaidev Singh, *Pandit Dayananda Unveiled*, Part II, Pamphlet published in 1892 by the 'New Lyall' Press, Lahore, p. 16.
10. See Kenneth W. Jones, op. cit, pp. 94–119. Also see, Harjot Singh Oberoi, 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar: Illness, Healing and popular Culture in the Punjab', *Studies in History*, 3, 1 n.s. (1937).
11. *Selections from the Vernacular Newspaper Reports for the year 1900*, p. 175.
12. *The Nur Afshan* (Ludhiana), 10th February 1899, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspaper Reports*, 1899, p. 98.
13. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol I—India—Part I, Report by E.A. Gait, p. 120.
14. *Census of India*, 1901, op.cit, p. 116.
15. *The Punjab Census*, 1891, op.cit, p. 125.
16. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. XVII, Punjab—Part I. Report by Khan Ahamad Khan, Lahore, 1933, p. 179–80.
17. *Ibid*, p. 181–2.
18. I am grateful to Mrs. Swran Malhotra for being a ready source of Punjabi songs and proverbs.
19. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed (ed.), *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One step Back?* Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey, 1987, p. 30.
20. Prakash Tandon, op. cit, p. 55.
21. *Ibid*, p. 102.
22. Interview conducted with Mrs. Ram Rati Ghai on 3rd October 1990.
23. *The Arya Gazette* (Lahore), 28th April 1898, from the *Selections from Vernacular Newspapers published in the Punjab for the year 1898*.
24. B. Rama Shastri *Intermarriage of Hindus with Europeans and Other Non-Hindu Ladies*, Sant Singh Luther Oriental Press, Lahore, 1896.
25. *Ibid*, p. 27.
26. *Ibid*, p. 27.
27. *Ibid*, p. 14.
28. *Ibid*, p. 20–21.
29. *Ibid*, p. 31.
30. *Ibid*, p. 4.
31. Bawa Chajju Singh, *Brahmacharya versus Child Marriage*, Arorbars Press, Lahore, 1895.
32. *Ibid*, p. 11.

33. Ibid, p. 5.
34. Ibid, p. 6.
35. Ibid, p. 6.
36. Ibid, p. 14-15.
37. Ibid, p. 13-14.
38. Ibid, p. 13.
39. Ibid, p. 18.
40. G.M. Francis, *Perda System*, Bharat Sewak, Jullundur, 1895.
41. B. Rama Shastri, op. cit, p. 5-6.
42. For a discussion on this myth, see Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi?', in Kum-Kum Sangari Sudesh Vaid ed., *Recasting Women : Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, 1989
43. B. Rama Shastri, op. cit, p. 6.
44. G.M. Francis, op. cit, p. 5. I am grateful to Mrs. Qureshy for helping me in translating this pamphlet from Urdu.
- 45.. Ibid, p. 6.
46. Ibid, p. 7.
47. Ibid, p. 16.
48. *Ataliq-i-Hind* (Lahore) 8th June 1892 from the Selections of Vernacular Newspaper Reports, op. cit, 1892, p. 169.
49. *Taj-ul-Akhbar*, (Lahore), 16th July 1898, Selections . . . op. cit, 1898, p. 452-3.
50. *Khair-Khwah-i-Kashmir* (Lahore), 18th November, 1890, Selections . . . 1890, p. 421.
51. *The Akhbar-i-Am* (Lahore), 15th January 1898, Selections . . . 1898, p. 53.
52. *The Kaisar-ul-Akhbar* (Karnal), 21st March 1891, Selections . . . 1891, p. 164.
53. *The Sat Dharm Pracharak* (Jullunder), 12th May 1899, Selections . . . 1899, p. 321-2.
54. Read Madhu Kishwar, 'The Daughters of Aryavarttha'a (*Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, April-June 1986) for a discussion of the fear of 'over-culturization' of women.
55. G.M. Francis, op. cit., p. 16.
56. *Kaisar-i-Akhbar* (Karnal), 4th July 1891, Selections . . . 1891, p. 251.
57. *The Koh-i-Nur* (Lahore), 23rd April 1892, Selections . . . 1892, p. 117.
58. Prakash Tandon, op. cit, p. 40.
59. Ganga Bishan, *Dayandi Shadi*, Shahab-Saqib, Lahore, 1889. I am grateful to Dr. S.N.H. Jafri, Reader, Jamia Milia Islamia, and Faisal Devji for helping me with the translation of this Urdu pamphlet into English.
60. Ibid, p. 16.
61. Ibid, p. 15.
62. Ibid, p. 18.
63. Ibid, p. 8.
64. Ibid, p. 23.
65. *The Sat Dharm Pracharak* (Jullundur), 5th May 1899, Selections . . . 1899, p. 274.
66. Ruchi Ram Sahni, *The Niyoga Doctrine of the Arya Samaj*, 'Punjab Economical' Press, Lahore, 1897.
67. *The Nanak Prakash* (Kapurthala), July 1890, Selections . . . 1890, p. 330.
68. *Census of India, 1901*, op. cit., p. 86.
69. *The Sat Dharm Pracharak* (Jullundur), 8th October 1897, Selections . . . 1897, p. 920.
70. *The Rakhbar-i-Hind* (Lahore), 13th Dec 1890, Selections . . . 1890, p. 459.
71. T. Williams's letter in Pt. Gurudutt Vidyarthi, M.A., *Wisdom of the Rishis*, Sayvadeshik Pustakalaya, Delhi, p. 441-2.
72. Ibid. p. 442.
73. Ibid. p. 443.
74. Grihastha, Ibid, p. 110-11.

75. Ibid, p. 431.
76. See for example, *The Arya Musafir Magazine* (Jullundur), May 1900, Selections . . . 1900, p. 505.
77. Ruchi Ram Sahni, op. cit, p. 1.
78. Ibid, p. 3.
79. Ibid, p. 2.
80. *The Hakam* (Kadian), 17th April 1900, Selections 1900, p. 218.
81. Ruchi Ram Sahni, op. cit, p. 31.
82. Ibid, p. 38.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid, p. 36.
85. *The Hakam* (Kadian), 17th May 1900, Selections . . . 1900, p. 278.
86. *The Akhbar-i-An* (Lahore), 10th March 1897, Selections . . . 1897, p. 169.
87. On the prophecy of Lekh Ram's death see, *Bharat Sudhar* (Lahore), 13th March 1897, in Selections . . . 1897, p. 180-1.
88. *The Alhakam* (Kadian), 16th September 1900, Selections 1900, p. 547.
89. Ibid.
90. *The Anwar-ul-Islam* (Sialkot), 15th May 1900, Selections. . . 1900, p. 278.
91. Ruchi Ram Sahni, op. cit, p. 35.
92. *The Arya Musafir Magazine* (Jullundur), September 1900, Selections . . . 1900, op cit, p. 570.
93. *The Sat Dharm Pracharak* (Jullundur) 2nd and 9th November 1900, Selections . . . 1900, op. cit, p. 638.
94. Ruchi Ram Sahni, op. cit, p. 92.
95. Interview with Mrs Vidya Malik conducted on 15th June 1990.



BISWAMOY PATI\*

*Of Movements, Compromises and Retreats:  
Orissa, 1936-1939\*\**

In the phase following the Civil Disobedience Movement in Orissa, out of the disappointment with its withdrawal, there emerged a Socialist trend, as well as a realisation among the youthful Socialists of the need to have a fighting front for the peasants. The stage was, thus set for the birth of the Kisan Sangha (1935).

The Province of Orissa was born on 1 April 1936. It was in this context that the colonial government decided to implement the 1935 Act and have the elections in 1937 in order to create legislatures in the provinces, including Orissa. The election was preceded by hectic election campaigns, with the Congress and the zamindars wooing the electorate. Under pressure from the Kisan Sangha the Provincial Congress Committee incorporated the abolition of the zamindari system in its election manifesto. This paved the way for the Kisan Sangha to play a crucial role in the election campaign of the Congress. It was this interaction that enhanced the prestige of both the Congress and the Kisan Sangha and stirred the countryside.

The elections led to the victory of the Congress and the installation of the first Congress ministry in Orissa. At the same time the peasant movement attained new heights. The strong militancy of the peasant movement led to a struggle between the 'left' and the 'right' wings of the Congress over the Kisan Sangha's relationship with the Congress. Thus, whereas the 'right' wing advocated a total merger of the Kisan Sangha with the Congress, the 'left' wing upheld that the Kisan Sangha should maintain its independent identity as a fighting front of the peasants, and also maintain close links with the Congress. This tussle contributed significantly to the birth of the Communist Party in Orissa (1938).

The post-election phase also saw a shift in the Congress' position. It toned down its radical thrust, compromised its anti-feudal position and became more a commodating to the landlords. This produced consid

\*Department of History, Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University.

\*\*This paper focuses on the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore and the Jeypur zamindari.

erable effect on the peasant movement—although the process was not uniform.

Radicalisation, Legislative Politics and the 'Breakes': The State of the Peasant Movement in Coastal Orissa and the Jeypur estate:

The post-Civil Disobedience period was marked by a political lull. The Gandhian alternatives of Harijan upliftment and village reconstruction coupled with Gandhi's visit to Orissa were hardly sufficient to fill the vacuum. Many young activists of the Congress were disillusioned with the Gandhian retreats.<sup>1</sup> People like Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Surendranath Dwivedy, Bhāgabati Charan Pannigrahi, Pranath Pattnaik and Gour Charan Das got together and formed the Utkal Samyavadi Karmi Sangha (Utkal Socialist Workers Association) in 1933.<sup>2</sup>

In a context in which the Congress work had slowed down and the Communist Party had not yet been organized the destiny of the peasant movement passed on to the hands of the Congress Socialists. May Day was observed at Cuttack from 1933 and *Sarathi*, their newspaper, began circulating from around the end of the same year.<sup>3</sup> The floods of 1933 which had ravaged the districts of Cuttack and Puri provided the immediate context to the Socialists for working amidst the peasantry. The efforts of Mahtab to form a Krushak Sangha merged with that of the Socialists.<sup>4</sup> This attempt remained confined to the three coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore although some spontaneous peasant movements did exist in other parts as well.

When it came to methods of working the Socialists tried to use *Sarathi* to reach the peasantry and asked the readers to send letters stating their grievances, responses to which seldom came in.<sup>5</sup> Even though Mahtab wrote about 'the necessity of a social revolution'<sup>6</sup> the heart of the countryside was yet to be touched.<sup>7</sup>

The situation improved marginally after the first conference was held in February 1934. The focus shifted to establishing some camps in the districts of Cuttack and Puri and taking up day-to-day issues of the peasants arising from their interaction with landlords, moneylenders and the police.<sup>8</sup> The hegemony of the established order was extremely strong. The peasants viewed the landlords as god's representatives and viewed their own existence within the framework of the god's will and fate. Although the two mass movements (i.e. the Non-Cooperation and the Civil Disobedience Movements) had weakened the hold of the zamindars and the colonial administration the sight of the petty official could, on occasion disrupt a discussion with peasants.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless changes were taking place. The exposure to the peasants and tribals during the two mass movements and the sense of frustration and disillusionment with Gandhian politics narrowed down the gulf between the intellectual and the peasant. The camps and *Sarathi* epistomised this phenomenon. Consequently the ideological background to work with the peasants was prepared.<sup>10</sup>

It was against this background that the Utkala Kisan Sangha was born in 1935. This gave a new thrust to and offered new possibilities for the peasant movement in Orissa. Mohanlala Gautam presided over its first conference at Cuttack in which a resolution was put forward for the abolition of the zamindari system. Although opposed by most of the leaders the resolution was passed and the kisan delegates stoutly supported it.<sup>11</sup>

The Utkala Kisan Sangha welcomed people of all shades, so much so that even Mandhata Gorachand Pattnaik who was a spokesman of the landed elements and was a retained lawyer of some big zamindars found a place in it. Mahtab became its President and Malati Chaudhury its Secretary. Intensive work was launched in the three coastal districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri. The initial successes of the Kisan Sangha had a very positive impact on the rural folk by weakening the hold of the established order on them and kisan committees sprang up in different villages.<sup>12</sup>

The province of Orissa was formed in April 1936. When the All India Kisan Sabha had its first conference at Lucknow (11 April 1936), Orissa was represented by Mahtab, Lingaraj Misra, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Surendranath Dwivedy.<sup>13</sup> Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was elected as the President. In a speech he argued that there was no possibility of a compromise between landlords and the peasants except by dispossession of the landlords. Ram Manohar Lohia criticised the Gandhian policy of defending the landlords *vis-a-vis* peasants. Sohan Singh Josh pleaded for combining the struggle for zamindari abolition with the struggle against imperialism.<sup>14</sup>

These developments boosted the peasant movement in Orissa. The PCC, especially the youthful Socialists spread the message of the Kisan Sangha in some of the remotest corners of the province.<sup>15</sup> The Kisan Sabha exposed zamindar-government collusion and attracted many rural Congressmen. As surendranath Dwivedy puts it, for the first time there was a clear realisation among the peasants that the government was on the side of the zamindars.<sup>16</sup> Although it is not possible to determine how widespread this realisation was, one can perhaps associate the coastal tract with his observation.

While analysing the various issues discussed in the meetings in the countryside (April to June 1936) some features stand out quite clearly. We do observe a contrast between the meetings of the Kisan Sangha and the PCC. The Kisan Sangha, like the PCC, urged the necessity of strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle. But it went beyond this goal by stressing the need for anti-feudal struggle as well. A section of the PCC (i.e. the Socialists) was identified with this trend. This was the 'left' wing of the PCC which was shaping, and was being shaped by, the Kisan Sangha. In contrast the PCC meetings harped only on the anti-imperialist theme and clung to the Gandhian programmes of

*khadi*, village reconstruction, Harijan upliftment and prohibition. This section was also active in the Kisan Sangha. This was the PCC 'right' wing and its representatives were individuals like Nilakantha Das, Godavaris Misra and Acharya Hari Har Das. However, what needs to be pointed out is that there were some common elements in the position of both the wings *vis-à-vis* the Kisan Sangha. Both sought an amendment of the tenancy laws, the reduction of land and water taxes, enquiries into the conditions of the peasants and the promotion of primary education. Moreover, some individuals like Mahtab were associated with both the wings and were visible from the platforms of the PCC as well as the Kisan Sangha. Between April and June 1936 we observe a thinning down of the dividing line between the PCC and the Kisan Sangha. Nevertheless, the contrast between the 'left' and the 'right' wing continued.<sup>17</sup> Consequently the peasant movement played a significant role in this sort of the polarisation within the PCC.

By June 1936 when the PCC woke up for the elections (scheduled for January 1937)<sup>18</sup> the Kisan Sangha's base among the peasants and tribals was sought to be explored. Analysing the innumerable meetings of this period (i.e. from June 1936 to January 1937) we can perceive that the Kisan Sangha's meetings merged with the PCC's election meetings. We do witness an unprecedented militancy of the 'right' wing. Its phraseology tended to veer towards anti-feudalism but it maintained its distinct character. For example, although prominent 'right' wing PCC elements like Nilakantha Das criticised the zamindars for high-rent demands they did not advocate zamindari abolition. In this phase some individuals like Mahtab got closely identified with the 'left' wing. As for the 'left' wing it linked up the question of the 'dark zones'—princely states—with the elections.<sup>19</sup>

The observance of the All India Kisan Day (1.9.1936) in different parts of the province and the inauguration of the election campaign by the PCC (13 September 1936)<sup>20</sup> symbolised the fusion that had apparently taken place for the moment between the struggle against imperialism and feudalism. Some prominent leaders associated with local peasant struggles became the Congress candidates.<sup>21</sup> Consequently what we see is that in many cases the elections gave the PCC an opportunity to link itself to 'local' struggles and thereby strengthen its base among the peasants and tribals.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the peasant movement and the Kisan Sangha was to make the PCC accept its basic position regarding the abolition of the zamindari system, a complete remission of rents and taxes for all whose annual income was less than Rs 250 and a debt moratorium for five years.<sup>22</sup> Under pressure from the Kisan Sangha the PCC was forced to release a radical supplementary election manifesto which incorporated these points. As Ranga put it: 'Orissa peasants are alone in the happy position of having made their PCC promise the abolition of the zamindari system.'<sup>23</sup> How does one

explain this uniqueness? It needs to be pointed out that the formation of the PCC in Orissa (1920) had coincided with a break with the feudal elements (zamindars and rajas) who had patronised the Utkala Sammilani. This process had been reinforced by two mass movements (i.e. Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience). Consequently the links between the PCC and the zamindari interests were weak.

It is a recognised fact that the PCC's election campaign spread like wild fire because it linked the struggle against the twin contradictions of imperialism and feudalism in its election campaign and because its chief opponents were the landed sections represented by the National Party and the United Party.

The visit of Nehru to Orissa in November 1936 in the 'Indian summer of his leftism'<sup>24</sup> was an important event. In his speeches Nehru launched an attack on colonialism and feudalism<sup>25</sup> which inspired the peasant masses. Nehru's visit to Jagannatha's temple prior to his Puri meeting was aimed to secure legitimacy and reflected the importance the Congress attached to the old order in its attempt to establish a 'new' order. For the peasants of coastal Orissa the fact that even Nehru accepted them and stood by them was of vital importance. Consequently the invisible aspect of Nehru's visit was perhaps more important than his actual visit or his meetings.

Very soon after this the second session of the Utkal Provincial Kisan Conference was held at Puri (November 15, 1936). Swami Sahajanand presided over this session which was attended by about three thousand delegates. Lokanath Misra (the president of the Reception Committee) outlined the position of the Kisan Sangha through his frontal attack on landlordism and by calling for its abolition. This was followed by Sahajanand's speech and a resolution which incorporated the social and economic demands of the Kisan Sangha regarding zamindari abolition, the transfer of the land to the tiller, a boycott of the Government in case it declared war and the formation of peasant's defence committees to guard against the oppression of zamindars.<sup>27</sup>

This conference stirred the peasants. We get interesting reference to how a day after the conference a number of peasants visited the Sub-Divisional Officer of Puri and made various demands like the removal of the salt tax, strengthening of certain embankments and stopping the oppression of certain zamindars.<sup>28</sup> This act symbolised simultaneously the hopes the Kisan Conference had generated, the legitimacy enjoyed by colonial rule and a desire to seek redressal from the colonial authorities in order to settle disputes with the immediate exploiters—something so typical of peasant consciousness.

Coming more specifically to the election campaign the PCC did tap the *hatas* and the *melas*—the traditionally important transmission points where the 'country' and the 'city' interacted. Besides speeches, the *Samaj* and the *Lokamata* carried its message to the interiors of the province. The PCC also devised the technique of appealing through

symbols like grindstones or a mouse in a trap. Perhaps the grindstones symbolised colonial and feudal exploitation and the mouse in a trap expressed the wretched plight of the helpless Indians. These must have produced considerable effect on the rural folk who could easily identify themselves with these symbols.<sup>29</sup>

The PCC also popularised its message through *vote geeti* which were sung by *kirtan* parties. In some areas *sadhus* held in high esteem also championed the cause of the PCC. Popular perceptions located the Congress candidates as the true representatives of Lord Jagannatha who had entered the politics of Orissa's first election. For example a Congress candidate who had chosen blue as his colour was believed to have done so at the instance of Jagannatha, whose symbol, the Chakra, was of the same colour. Pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses also appeared on the election posters. Besides the association with yellow (which was the colour of the Congress) symbolised a link with Hinduism. It was looked upon as an 'auspicious' colour and red—the colour of the opponents—was viewed as the blood of the people.<sup>30</sup>

Thus the 'good'/'evil' dialectic of peasant rationality seems to have been a very vital component which shaped popular perceptions. Consequently the PCC's association with Jagannatha was not perceived as an endorsement of the old order. The ballot box reached the peasants as the 'poor man's box' or as 'Gandhi's box' and the voters bowed to it while casting their vote.<sup>31</sup> The invisible legitimacy of the Mahatma weighted heavily on the popular mind. In some areas petitions to Gandhi were discovered in the ballot boxes.<sup>32</sup> Besides, the PCC also emerged as the saviour from above. We have references to peasants meeting Congress workers after voting in order to secure a record that would entitle them to rent-remission.<sup>33</sup>

The electioneering techniques of the opponents were centred around monetary incentives and appealing to the imagination of the rural folk from the 'heavens' using aeroplanes. We also have evidence of the landed elements distributing Jagannatha's *mahaprasad* after meetings and the 'earthly incarnation' of the lord—the Puri Raja—distributing it in order to secure the support of the Kanika voters. The obvious motive was to secure a sort of pledge from the voters. However, the hegemony of the old order seemed to be crumbling. The voters bowed to the *mahaprasad* but dropped their ballot paper in the Congress box, bowed again and walked out.<sup>34</sup> Adequate apologies were thus made to the Lord. Although popular perceptions accepted the 'new' by apologising to the 'old', even then this indicated an undermining of age-old beliefs and values.

Since the election forecasts had predicted an inevitable Congress defeat the election results in which the PCC won 36 out of the 40 seats it had contested surprised everyone, including the PCC leaders themselves.<sup>35</sup> For the 'right' wing the radicalisation of the PCC was consternating.<sup>36</sup> The All India Kisan Conference projected this as an

eye opener to all those who were opposed to it.<sup>37</sup> For the peasants and tribals the electoral victory of the PCC meant the dawning of a 'new age'. Their hopes and imagination had been fired by the PCC and in some areas they stopped paying their taxes in order to assert the PCC's victory which they saw as their own. Gandhi was located as their Maharaja who would 'let them of all their taxes'. There was a marked enthusiasm to get recruited as Congress members.<sup>38</sup>

The post-election context made the landed sections extremely insecure.

Given the position adopted by the Congress High Command the PCC refused acceptance of office and on 1 April 1937 a minority ministry headed by the Maharaja of Parliakhemedi assumed office.

As for the peasant movement the Kisan Sangha maintained its political thrust. In some areas of the Cuttack district Muslims began attending Kisan Sangha meetings.<sup>39</sup> Around May 1937 we get references to a very 'tense' situation resulting from peasant militancy in the province.<sup>40</sup> In Puri a powerful anti-*mohunt* movement developed.<sup>41</sup> The PCC struck roots in some interior parts of the province like the Jeypur zamindari where Congress MLAs were making enquiries into forest grievances, forced labour and customary dues. Some of these meetings were very well attended considering that they attracted as many as 5,000 people on occasions.<sup>42</sup>

It was against this backdrop that a bitter struggle developed between the 'left' and the 'right' wing of the PCC centred around the relationship between the Congress and the Kisan Sangha. Nilakantha Das, who opened the offensive against both the 'left' wing and the Kisan Sangha, questioned the very need for an independent organisation of the peasants in conference of the highly militant Puri Kisan Sangha. As the President he moved a resolution which proposed that the Kisan Sangha should be a part of the Congress organisation and should exist within the Congress. Thus only four-*anna* Congress members could become members of the Kisan Sangha. The obvious aim was to keep the Kisan Sangha under the control of the Congress. When put to vote the 'left' wing failed to prevent this resolution from being passed. In an audience of about 5000 people this resolution was passed by a majority of about 100. This controversy raised its head in Orissa for the first time.<sup>43</sup> It symbolised the fear of the 'right' wing which came face to face with a powerful peasant movement. Even some individuals like Mahtab were eye-sores to the PCC 'right' wing for their association with the Kisan Sangha.<sup>44</sup> The PCC 'right' wing adopted a more cautious approach, concentrating primarily on the recruitment for the PCC, the Gandhian programme and occasionally directed its attention to the allegations against the landlords, the moneylenders and the police and the 'probability' of rent reduction if the Congress formed a ministry.<sup>45</sup>

As for the 'left' wing it was quite vocal in stating its position that the Kisan Sangha had its own specificity and hence could not merge with the PCC. What needs to be emphasised is that although the 'left' wing was not opposed to the idea of Congress membership it was opposed to the merger of the Kisan Sangha with the PCC. In fact they brought in a resolution for collective affiliation of Kisan workers, youth and students organisations.<sup>46</sup> As articulated by the All India Kissan Conference the Kisan Sabha 'was a class organisation of the masses'. The importance of linking-up the struggle for independence with the struggle of the peasants was emphasised. As Sahajanand put it this would, instead of embarrassing the Congress, strengthen it as well as the freedom struggle.<sup>47</sup>

The Kisan Sangha in Orissa managed to withstand the 'right' wing offensive. It continued to expand and absorb some organisations which aimed to solve peasant grievances constitutionally.<sup>48</sup> Our evidence indicates that the three coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Blasore had emerged as the bastions of the Kisan Sangha.<sup>49</sup>

The case was somewhat similar in the Jeypur zamindari. In the absence of the Kisan Sangha it was the PCC which had fired the imagination of the peasants and tribals. They stopped paying rents. This meant that the estate ran into arrears in rent collection.<sup>50</sup>

By the first week of July 1937 the Congress High Command had accepted the idea of ministry formation in the provinces where the Congress had absolute majority. In Orissa the minority ministry resigned and the Congress ministry assumed office on 19 July 1937. This event was celebrated throughout the province. It was seen as a prelude to the emancipation of peasants and tribals, with substantial reduction in taxes and land revenue, a substantial curtailment in the powers and the privileges enjoyed by the zamindars with a proportionate increase in their own rights.<sup>51</sup> Nehru's statement that the peasants could organize their own committees<sup>52</sup> and Biswanath Das' assurance that his Cabinet would strive its utmost to redress the grievances of the peasants<sup>53</sup> restored as well as legitimised the belief in the dawning of a 'new age' which had been anticipated for quite some time and which had been interrupted by the 'evil' zamindars.

The installation of the first popular ministry converged with even greater enthusiasm to spread the message of the Congress into the remotest corners of the province. The PCC wasted no time in consolidating itself in the absence of the Kisan Sangha in the Jeypur zamindari where it had been an abstract force prior to 1936. A 'Gandhi gomasta' was put in charge of 25 villages throughout the estate so as to note and redress popular grievances.<sup>54</sup>

Of course the popularity of the PCC as well as the Kisan Sangha made this effort relatively easier in the three coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. The new thrust focussed on looking at the policemen without suspicion and fear since, after all, they were under



the control of the Congress Ministry.<sup>55</sup> This reflected a serious effort to re-establish the authority of the disciplining apparatus which had been severely undermined. However, the symptoms of the PCC's retreat from its electoral promises was grasped by the Kisan Sangha. It was critical of the ministry when it issued orders to stay decrees for collections of rents and taxes only till the end of December instead of a total moratorium on all debts and dues for five years.<sup>56</sup>

The Kisan Day celebrations of 1 September, 1937 symbolised the culmination of a year of bitter struggles and hopes which had given the peasants an identity and had radicalised them. Nearly twenty thousand peasants marched to Cuttack from different parts of the province, electrifying the countryside. A mile and a half long procession of peasants with the national and the red flags with the hammer and sickle, shouting slogans like 'Down with Imperialism' and 'Abolish Landlordism' marched through the streets of Cuttack and met the Premier.<sup>57</sup>

What can be observed is that the popular level had accepted the demand for zamindari abolition but the speakers seemed to have highlighted the anti-imperialist position while toning down the anti-feudal aspect. Instead the focus was on the symptoms of feudal exploitation. This significant omission is understandable given the linkages of the Kisan Sangha with the PCC. After all, a popular ministry had to be given time to act. The problem inherent in this sort of a position, of course, was that since the Congress ministry was in power it would solve all the problems. As we shall see it was this illusion that developed in due course.

The Kisan Day rally coincided with hundreds of other meetings held on the same day in different parts of the province and was a part of a broad campaign.<sup>58</sup> After this two major developments took place. The PCC and the Kisan Sangha conducted extensive enquiries regarding peasant grievances. Besides, after returning from the rally the peasants of the three coastal districts stopped paying the *Sunniya Vethi*. The Kisan Day rally had provided the necessary sanction and legitimacy. Besides, they became more conscious of their rights and began resisting the customary illegal exactions of the landlords.<sup>59</sup>

In the legislature, September, 1937 was quite crucial as the debates indicated the shape of things to come. Biswanath Das had set the perspective of the ministry by clearly denying any plans to impose a tax on agricultural incomes, and asking the landed sections 'not to be led by the cries of the Socialists'. However, there was an expectation among the PCC MLAs as is evident from the discussions on the budget. For example, Sarala Devi regretted the absence of any reference to remission of rents and water rates. She had expected the Ministry to take a bold position and tax the landlords. Sadasiv Tripathy felt disappointed due to the low priority given to the 'excluded areas' (i.e. Koraput and Ganjam) Chakradhara Behera mirrored the sentiments of

the Kanika peasants by calling for an abolition of the permanent settlement and by criticising the levies and oppression faced by the peasants. Of course, the Socialists Pranānath Pattnaik and Mohan Das severely criticised the budget because it did not contain any provisions of the poor.<sup>60</sup>

In this session two major tenancy bills were introduced in the Legislature: the Madras Estates Land (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 1937 and the Orissa Tenancy Amendment Bill, 1937.

The Madras Estates Land (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 1937, was applicable to the area which had come to Orissa in 1936 from the Madras Presidency especially Ganjam. The rents collected in this area was very high since it was calculated on the basis of half the gross produce of the land. This was much higher than the adjoining areas of the province. Consequently the Bill aimed at rationalising the rent structure by reducing it to the rent prevailing in the nearest raiatwari areas in the province with similar conditions. It was referred to the Select Committee. Before it was brought back to the House the PCC made an abortive attempt for a compromise with the landlords of south Orissa by offering some concessions. The Bill was finally passed on 5 February 1938. The Governor refused to give his assent to it in May, 1938 and it was reserved for the Viceroy's assent.<sup>61</sup>

The way the Congress High Command responded to the Bill after it was passed gives us an insight into how the implications were grasped, perhaps after it was passed and the pressure exerted by the landed sections. Patel wanted the Premier to have a discussion with the zamindars although it would be 'awkward' for Das and try to formulate a reasonable basis for rent reduction as compared to the Bill. Das was advised to utilise the pressure of the peasant movement while discussing with the landlords and point out to them that the PCC's credibility was necessary in order to prevent peasants from joining rival kisan organisations.<sup>62</sup>

The Bill could not be implemented since the Viceroy refused to give his assent to it. The PCC was in no mood to force a ministerial crisis over the issue.<sup>63</sup> The Kisan Sangha wanted the ministry to resign in case the Bill was not passed by 1st June 1938 and lead the peasants in a Civil disobedience Movement.<sup>64</sup> However, the 'unpreparedness' of the Congress to force a ministerial crisis on this issue<sup>65</sup> and a shift to a pro-landlord position prevented such a development.

The Orissa Tenancy Amendment Bill, 1937 was introduced on 25 September, 1937. It sought to abolish the mutation fee (something which had been already outlined in the programme of the minority ministry), give rights to the tenants over trees standing on their holdings, reducing interest rates from 12 1/2% to 6% on rent arrears and restraining illegal levies of the zamindars.<sup>66</sup>

The landed sections responded to it with serious panic. They smelled 'Leninism' in the Bill. The Premier harped on the pressure of the

peasant movement while pointing out that unless these small things were done the landlords would be scrapped as a class.<sup>67</sup> Outside the Legislature the landlords got together and expressed their anger at the Bill and prayed to the Government not to pass it. They also pledged to fight the evil of socialism.<sup>68</sup>

By the time the Bill was finalised a retreat was already visible. Thus the Congress Ministry agreed to an amendment which stated that in case the rights of the landlords over trees were recorded in the settlement or had been established in Civil Courts then the peasants had to pay a compensation to the landlords to secure this right. The Congress also backed out from its position regarding the mutation fees by agreeing to abolish it in degrees.<sup>69</sup> Besides, as pointed out by the Kisan Sangha, the Bill had nothing to offer regarding the rights of thousands of non-occupancy tenants.<sup>70</sup>

This Bill was passed by the Assembly on 3rd May 1938. The Governor declined to make any announcement and finally gave his assent on 31st August, 1938—a day before the massive Kisan Day rally at Jenapur, in Cuttack. The mighty preparations for the rally had been closely watched.<sup>71</sup> The peasants saw it as a victory and grasped the meaning of their strength.

At the rally attended by more than 20,000 peasants Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Chudhury explained the issues—although 'their' representatives passed the Bill, the representatives of British imperialism had blocked it for such a long time.<sup>72</sup>

The Congress ministry also introduced the Orissa Moneylenders Bill on 25 July, 1938. It laid down the provision that the moneylenders had to get registered in order to carry out their practice. It sought to prevent moneylenders from realising interests to more than the amount that had been advanced, with a right to open up old accounts from 1 April, 1936, for the purpose of calculations. The Bill introduced the principle of simple interest rates, not exceeding 9% in case of a secured loan and 12% in case of an unsecured loan. Finally it provided for some penalties for moneylenders for illegal extortions, like cancellation of registration certificates given to them.<sup>73</sup> It may be noted here that the Kisan Sangha had demanded 6% interest on secured loans and 9% interest for unsecured loans.<sup>74</sup> The Governor gave his assent to this Bill on 30 June, 1939.

What can be observed is a marked shift in the attitude of the PCC and the landed elements *vis-à-vis* each other by the end of 1937 itself.<sup>75</sup> The landed elements talked of *satyagraha* against the proposals of the Ministry and met the ministers to seek redressal of their grievances.<sup>76</sup> Some of them suggested measures to decrease the burdens on the peasantry.<sup>77</sup> We have references to some of them becoming Congressmen and along with local workers trying to recruit the rural poor forcibly as members of the Congress and using the legal apparatus to achieve this.<sup>78</sup> Rajendra Prasad's suggestion to have

Nilakantha Das as the chairman of a committee to enquire into peasant grievances symbolised the position of the Congress High Command and thereby the shift at the all-India level.<sup>79</sup>

In fact, 'Rajendra Prasad emerged as a 'saviour' for the landed interests of Orissa as well as their 'right' wing defenders within the PCC. Some landlords expressed their happiness at his success in bringing about a compromise with the landed elements in Bihar.<sup>80</sup> Nanda Kishore Das, the Deputy Speaker of the Orissa Legislative Assembly went a step further. He congratulated Prasad for taking a bold stand against the Kisan Sabha and thanked him for showing the way to the Orissa PCC to deal with the kisan problem. He asserted that, 'may you be the saviour of Orissa as you have been of Bihar.'<sup>81</sup>

Consequently, by the end of 1937, we find that the election promises to reduce rents had been thrown into the dust-bin of history through the intervention of the Congress High Command. At the Instance of Rajendra Prasad the Premier withdrew amendments for rent reduction. As felt by Biswanath Das the peasants were expected to pay such high rents which they could never pay.<sup>82</sup> Along with this was the emphasis that although the Ministry and the PCC would solve the problems of the peasants, they in turn had to pay their legal dues to the zamindars and *mahajans* since non-payment of dues was not on the agenda. Another emphasis was to crush the 'middlemen' before anything else.<sup>83</sup> We also have evidence of moves to demobilise peasants who had risen against the landlords and *mohunts* of Puri by prominent PCC 'right' wingers like Nilakantha Das and Godavaris Misra.<sup>84</sup> Besides by the end of November 1937 the Puri landlords issued orders to their agents to collect arrears of rent before February 1938. This symbolised a sign of victory for the landlords since the PCC had not been able to introduce remission or suspension of rents as provided in the election manifesto.<sup>85</sup> In fact, what is interesting is that the National Party started asking the PCC to implement its election promises.<sup>86</sup>

The Kisan Sangha attempted to meet the challenge. It articulated its positions regarding some burning issues of the day. It attacked the paternalism of the landlords who opined that the abolition of the mutation fees would have harmful effects on the peasants. It expected laws to be framed for a six months imprisonment term for those landlords who levied illegal dues. It mentioned how the election had fired the imagination of the peasants and they wanted the PCC to fulfill its promises after the election. However, in this changed context it noted how the PCC 'right' wing had joined the landlords in attacking the 'violence' of the Kisan Sangha since there was a fear that it threatened their class interests. The Sangha spelt out the dilemma of those within the PCC (i.e. the 'left' wing) who were trying to cut the very tree under which they had taken shelter.<sup>87</sup>

As the gulf between the PCC and the landed elements narrowed down the peasant movement got dampened. Our evidence indicates

how the PCC, in fact, prevented the Kisan Sangha from developing in certain areas. Thus as we have clearly seen in the Jeypur zamindari the PCC took up popular grievances like *bethi* and illegal dues and mobilized the peasants and tribals from the outset.<sup>88</sup> Another consequence of this shift was the intensification of anti-imperialist politics in some government estates like Angul where the colonial government was bitterly criticised for popular grievances. The Premier visited Angul and urged for meetings with the peasants and tribals to understand their problems.<sup>89</sup>

On occasions we do get evidence of tension between the PCC 'right' wing and the 'left' wing (as well as the Kisan Sangha). A meeting at Darpan (October 1937) for example opened with a garlanding of the police officials present—an attempt to re-establish their authority. The gathering of 5,000 peasants and tribals were asked not to fear the police since they would not harass them anymore as they were under the control of the peasants. However, they were warned that if they harassed the police then they would be sent to prison. Despite this, the resolution at this meeting called for the abolition of the zamindari system and forced labour (from Savaras, Ranas and the Bauris), recognising the peasants' rights over their lands, trees and forests and also expressed 'no-confidence' in the zamindar of Madhupur who was going against those on whose votes he had been elected.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, in a meeting of the Mahanga peasants (28 November 1937) Krishna Chandra Naik criticised the Ministers as capitalists who would do nothing for the labouring people. He also bitterly criticised the landed elements. A local zamindar protested against these statements to Rajkrishna Bose, who stopped the speaker.<sup>91</sup>

However, we do get evidence of struggles and the radical temper which, of course, tended to get localised in certain areas. Here mention must be made of Sukinda (Cuttack district), an oppressive zamindari. The peasants and tribals of this estate had responded to the Kisan Day rally and had stopped paying the new year's gift to the zamindar. Led by Phani Pal, a Kisan Sangha activist, 200 of them had marched to the Sub-Divisional Officer at Jajpur and had presented him with a memorandum complaining against *bethi* and the oppressions of the estate officials. Landlessness was a major problem of the tribals, mostly Kols, and they wanted to clear portions of the forests. In spite of repeated petitioning this was not allowed by the landlord who had been 'making profits' out of the forests. Early in 1938, in a few days nearly one lakh trees were felled and although some tribals and their leader were arrested, a hundred acres of land had been cleared for cultivation.<sup>92</sup> The PCC 'right' wing viewed this as something 'unheard of', and in its anxiety to blame the Kisan Sangha and the 'left' wing (especially the Socialists)<sup>93</sup> it failed to locate this as a feature of popular protest which had been inspired by Gandhian nationalism.

We also have evidence of the Kisan Sangha's activities in Khurda and in some estates like Madhupur, Patia and Pachikote. The focus continued to be on the traditional demands of the Sangha. The need to have a separate organisation of the peasants and their unity with the working class was also reiterated. The Kisan Sangha called for intensifying the struggle against imperialism, criticised the pro-landlord position of the PCC and called for its democratisation.<sup>94</sup>

This militancy of course co-existed with a disillusionment among the PCC 'left' wing activists.<sup>95</sup> It was out of this situation that the *Krushak* (organ of the Kisan Sangha) and the Communist Party were born in 1938.

As for 1938 it is interesting to observe how the context shaped the political positions of Kisan Sangha activists as well as the PCC. One can illustrate this by taking up the example of Mahtab who had been the President of the Kisan Sangha. Mahtab's association with the Sangha had been an eye-sore for the PCC 'right' wing and he had been looked upon with suspicion.<sup>96</sup> Mahtab's position changed and after stating that there was nothing like a kisan or Socialist 'meance' in Orissa in January 1938,<sup>97</sup> he started talking about the troubles faced by the landlords because of the non-payment of rents by peasants, by February 1938. He advocated amendments to the Tenancy Act to ensure rent-collection and was a signatory to a petition submitted by the Bhadrak landlords to the Blasore magistrate, which identified the Socialists as being at the root of this problem.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, he also advised peasants to compromise with landlords.<sup>99</sup>

The annual conference of the Gandhi Seva Dal at Delang (Puri) in March 1938 where the top leadership of the Congress, including the Mahatma, were present both legitimised and reinforced this retreat and reflected its development at the all-India level. Mahtab was elected to the Working Committee of the Congress and Gopabandhu Chaudhury who replaced him as the President of the PCC assumed office by expressing his desire to revive orthodox Congress ideology and oust the kisan and Socialist elements from the PCC.<sup>100</sup> This signalled the triumph of the PCC 'right' wing.

In 1938 the euphoria with the popular ministry tended to decline. The PCC now clearly dominated by the 'right' wing connected the local grievances of the peasants and tribals to colonial exploitation. The anti-feudal aspect was increasingly toned down.

The Kisan Sangha tried to keep up the pressure in this hostile environment. The Debt Cancellation Day was observed along with the Gandhi Seva Dal conference at Delang. Nearly 30,000 copies of a leaflet which outlined its position were distributed here. This leaflet combined its attack against imperialism and the internal exploiters while projecting the specificity of the peasant movement. The PCC's attacks on the Sangha, the arrests of some of its activists and the effort to isolate it seem to have made this draft miss out a very significant

point—the link between the Sangha and the Congress which was not spelt out. This omission was particularly relevant since Patel (who was present at the Gandhi Seva Dal conference at Delang) was questioning the necessity of the Sangha and propagating that it would weaken the Congress.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, in this phase we do have evidence of peasant militancy. In some areas (i.e. Kujang and Madhpur) peasant committees were formed covering a large number of villages to defend the rights of the peasants. We have interesting references to popular forms of 'staling' fish from the landlords' tanks as well as confrontations with, and social boycott of zamindars.<sup>102</sup> Our evidence also indicates a 'friction' between peasants and landlords in Kanika, Dhamnagar (Balasore), Malipara (Puri), Sukinda, Madhupur, Darpan, Aul and Pachikote (Cuttack). The issues centred around grazing and forest rights. The peasants of the three districts had developed a sense of their rights as a result of their struggles and they refused to submit to demands for illegal exactions.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless the sweep of the peasant movement got dampened by the retreat of the Congress. The 'violence' of the Kisan Sangha became an oft-repeated theme of the PCC leadership.<sup>104</sup> Besides, the Kisan Sangha's activities and slogans were openly criticised at meetings.<sup>105</sup> What developed was a notion that the popular ministry would set things right and in fact, the PCC consistently emphasised this point, which served as a vital component to hegemonise the peasants and tribals. This also implied a certain degree of dampening of the anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>106</sup>

With the development of the popular struggle in the princely states the Kisan Sangha as well as the PCC 'left'—wing shifted its focus to the 'dark zones'.<sup>107</sup> In the absence of a democratic organisational structure in which the leaders were nominated by the top leadership the Kisan Sangha came to be controlled by pacifists. In fact after the Kisan Day celebrations of 1st September 1938 the work of the Sangha came to virtual standstill and its primary concern was recruitment for the PCC.<sup>108</sup>

Our evidence corroborates a decline in the spirit of the peasant movement, an effort to restrain it and an attempt by the landed sections to re-assert themselves.<sup>109</sup> The landed sections tried to re-assert their rights on common lands, forests, pastures and tanks<sup>110</sup>—areas where their authority has been seriously undermined in the preceding period.

In the Jeypur zamindari the PCC leaders like Radhamohan Sahu took up popular grievances like the tax on headloads taken to *hatas*, standardisation of weights and measures and demanded free supply of agricultural implements to the peasants and tribals.<sup>111</sup> This reflected a shift from the earlier anti-feudal demands like the abolition of *bethi* and the forcible supply of provisions to the zamindari and government officials. Such campaigns co-existed with intensive recruitment drives,

closely associated with rumors. We are told of how around July 1938 peasants and tribals of the estate believed that the Mahatma would visit the zamindari and those who did not produce Congress tickets would suffer from ailments.<sup>112</sup> Gandhi was deified and worshipped in Congress offices—which were like temples—in some areas.<sup>113</sup> Enthusiasm was also aroused through promises by the PCC that when Swaraj (would come) there would be no rents and taxes and no forest laws.<sup>114</sup>

The tribal folk welcomed the Congress by taking forcible possession of land and in one instance the Congress flag was planted on such land and the local sub-inspector who arrested the accused persons and removed the flag was attacked with an axe.<sup>115</sup> Efforts were made to replace *gandas* (i.e., village *chowkidars* appointed by the villagers) by Congress members.<sup>116</sup> Besides the following table which shows the area of *podu* cultivation:

Year	Acreage
1934-35	3294.20
1935-36	3552.40
1936-37	3706.92
1937-38	4658.80
1938-39	3510.21

indicates a sudden spurt in the 1937-38 phase, which can be perhaps cited as a rough index of popular enthusiasm to re-assert lost rights. The violations of forest laws were not only confined to the estate or Malkangiri but also affected the Kondgaon *tehsil* of the adjoining Bastar state. In early June 1938 several thousand *harra* trees were cut down by the villagers in imitation of the tenants of the Jeypur estate.<sup>117</sup>

It was in this situation that a shift took place in the PCC's position. In November 1938 a rousing welcome was given to Congress leaders like Gopabandhu Chaudhury (President PCC), Godavaris Misra and Dibakar Pattnaik (Members of the Legislative Assembly). Among those who received them were Bidyadhar Singh Deo (the nephew of the Jeypur Maharaja) who had contested the 1937 elections against the Congress and had lost. The Jubaka Sangha was established under his leadership although the President and Secretary of the Sangha were Congress members. He also became the President of the Harijan movement.<sup>118</sup> Interestingly Singh Deo indulged in intellectual pursuits and studied *goti* and *bethi* on which he wrote two papers. He appreciated the 'liberal attitude' of the estate *vis-à-vis* the *gotis* and felt that it should be discontinued 'as far as practicable'.<sup>119</sup>

This shift also implied a serious move to 'remould' the new Congress recruits in line with its politics. For achieving this purpose a training camp was opened at Nuaput (about five miles from Jeypur) in



November 1938. This was attended by around 300 to 400 people. Godavaris Misra and Gopabandhu Chaudhury organised it. At this camp the people were trained in spinning, scouting and village service. They were also taught farming, animal husbandry and the need for prohibition of liquor. These people served to link Koraput to the Congress and among them were prominent activists of the future like Laxman Naiko.<sup>120</sup>

The reconstruction of things becomes very difficult, given the paucity of evidence, but the PCC's campaign seems to have intimate links with a complex process which included Hinduisation as well as a social-reformist trend. The process of Hinduisation was not new. What was perhaps new was its linkages with the Congress. This becomes visible if one takes into account the deification and ritualised worshipping of the Mahatma, the establishment of Congress *ashrams*, the stress upon vegetarianism and abstinence from liquor—features quite alien to the tribal world. These were distinctly associated with both Hinduism and the Congress and were emulated to gain a certain degree of respect and recognition from both. Of course the phenomenon of social reformism was relatively new. This possibly arose out of a genuine concern over drinking which was an 'evil' in tribal society leading to the ruin of many families. These points perhaps explain a marked tendency among the tribal supporters of the PCC (including prominent activists like Laxman Naiko) for giving up hunting and eating meat<sup>121</sup> as well as the campaigns against liquor.

By the beginning of 1939 the shift climaxed with Nilakantha Das being elected as the president of the PCC and Godavaris Misra being elected as the Secretary of the PCC. Besides indicating the all-India implication in clearest terms this meant that the PCC and the Ministry came to be under the absolute control of the PCC 'right' wing. An all-out effort was initiated to combat the radicalisation that had taken place and counter the 'menace' of the Kisan Sangha. Training camps and *ashrams* were established for this purpose. Kisan Sangha workers were restrained through colonial laws, now controlled by the Congress ministry. We get references to peasants being warned to follow 'Gandhian' and 'constitutional' methods and serious moves to counter the ideological hold of the Socialists.<sup>122</sup> The abolition of landlordism became a feature quite remote.<sup>123</sup>

These pulls and pressures adversely affected the already demobilised Kisan Sangha. In a hastily called and thinly attended meeting of the Sangha on 27 February 1939 Phani Pal, the prominent Kisan Sangha leader, was removed from the Sangha thereby indicating a split within the 'left' wing and the Kisan Sangha. The resolution for his removal was proposed by Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Chaudhury seconded it. As we have seen these individuals were associated with the birth of both the Socialist Party and the Kisan Sangha. Pranakrushna Padhiary, the President of the Sangha

adjourned the meeting *sine-die* after this.<sup>124</sup> No elections of the Sangha took place in 1939 and Orissa was not represented at Gaya session of the All India Kisan Sabha.<sup>125</sup>

The demobilised Kisan Sangha left the field clear for the PCC 'right' wing to hegemonise the peasant movement. The PCC replaced struggle with negotiated settlement at the village level. Primary Congress Committees were instructed to act accordingly. Fines and social boycott were imposed on people who led struggles for raising the wages of agricultural labourers, by the Primary Congress Committees.<sup>126</sup>

As for the Jeypur estate we witness a rather volatile situation which the PCC had problems controlling. The tribals were showing signs of restlessness at the loss of traditional rights and refused to get 'remoulded'. They translated their perceptions into practice. Our evidence indicates the collections of funds to set up Congress *ashrams* and the appointment of village officials superseding those appointed by the Maharaja of Jeypur. Timber was 'illegally' taken for the purpose of building these *ashrams*. Rumors circulated, perhaps to legitimise such actions, that the district police would be prosecuted and the magistrate removed by the Chief Minister of Orissa, presumably because they tried to prevent such activities.<sup>127</sup>

The seriousness of the situation can be judged by the tours of both Nilakantha Das and Biswanath Das in order to assess the situation. Biswanath Das made it quite clear that the laws of the land had to be obeyed and only the minister—not the people—could change laws. Such moves did apparently restrain popular militancy.<sup>128</sup> However, the situation remained volatile.

By July 1939 the situation in Cuttack and Puri had been seriously affected due to floods. The crisis became extremely acute due to an unprecedented price rise which ranged from 15% to 100%. The outbreak of the War and large-scale hoardings (leading to the disappearance of grain from the market) precipitated this crisis. In some parts of the coastal tract we do get evidence of the Socialists and the Communists trying to build a movement. This included an attempt to re-activate the Kisan Sangha which was in a deplorable state. Pranath Pattnaik became its Secretary and pressure was put on the PCC for intensifying its struggle for *swaraj*.<sup>129</sup> Our evidence also suggests an activation of the peasant movement after a somewhat lean period. For example there was an increase in the total number of suits filed (it rose from 123,929 in 1937-38 to 128,710 in 1938-39) as a result of non-payment of rents especially in Cuttack and Balasore. We get references to peasant militancy in some estates like Sukinda, Madhupur, Kakala, Pachikote, Balarampur, Chausathipara and Aul in Cuttack, Kanika in Balasore and parts of Gop, Baliana, Kakatpur and the Ekrajat estate in Puri. These were centred around non-payment of rents by peasants, 'damaging landlords' property and trespassing on their lands. The peasants stopped *abwabs*. The 'position' and 'status' of

landlords was no longer 'enviable' or 'coveted' as it had been in the past and many expressed the desire that the management of their estates be taken over from their hands.<sup>130</sup> Simultaneously a decrease in the authority of the colonial structure was also indicated.<sup>131</sup> The problem of price rise and hoarding also affected the Jeypur estate. We get references to appeals to colonial authorities for grain, co-existing with Congress *gomastas* leading the 'looting' of a granary.<sup>132</sup> This latter phenomenon indicated pressures which the PCC could not control.

There seems to have some links between the decline of the peasant movement and that of PCC recruitment in the 1938-1939 period. Thus there was a fall in Cuttack (from 58,875 in 1937-38 to 35,474 in 1938-39) and Koraput (50,048 in 1937-38 to 26,900 in 1938-39); as for the whole province the figures revealed a decline (from 1,96,948 to 1,19,517 between 1937-38 and 1938-39).<sup>133</sup> Whereas the Kisan Sangha membership for 1938-39 stood at 20,000 for the province the membership of the Sangha in the princely states stood at 30,000.<sup>134</sup> Thereby indicating that the peasant movement had percolated into these 'dark zones'.

By November 1939 the anti-War position of the Congress led to the resignation of the ministry in Orissa. With this the colonial administration launched an offensive against the Kisan Sangha. Its offices were raided and its activists arrested in an attempt to smother it.<sup>135</sup> The PCC's emphasis now shifted to the possibility of a mass movement in the future.<sup>136</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that this phase was marked by a combination of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal currents in Orissa.<sup>137</sup> From a position of a non-entity in the Jaypur zamindari, the PCC became organisationally established, expanding/consolidating its social base.<sup>138</sup> Besides, one cannot miss the undermining of the hegemony of both colonialism and the feudal order. This is corroborated by the emergence of the peasants and tribals as a significant political force. This is also visible in the politics of the Kisan Sabha and the developments in the Jeypur zamindari.<sup>139</sup> In fact, as seen, the sweep of the peasant movement created a polarisation within the PCC and contributed significantly to the development of a Socialist trend and the birth of the Communist Party in Orissa. And, needless to say, by stirring the middle class intellectuals the peasant movement narrowed the gulf between them and the common people.<sup>140</sup>

In this phase we also witness the undermining of the social hierarchies (i.e. caste, class and tribal/non-tribal) and the development of political linkages between the coastal tract and the western interior. And, all these factors led to the consolidation of the depth of the national movement in Orissa. Nevertheless, this co-

existed with a virtual retreat of women from it. The space offered to women during the Civil Disobedience Movement<sup>141</sup> seems to have been visibly altered in this phase. Their participation in the leadership of the Kisan Sangha (e.g. Malati Chaudhury) or in the Legislature (eg. Sarala Devi) was only a token one.<sup>142</sup> Thus, they remained outside the political mainstream which was no longer perceived as an acceptable sphere of women's participation. This loss of space for women was marked by a continuity in the succeeding phases and reflects and shift backwards.

This phase also demonstrates the shifting position of the PCC. We have seen how its anti-zamindari position<sup>143</sup> changed once the elections were over and it formed the Ministry. Besides matching with the all-India position of the Congress, it was also related to the shifting position of the landlords—i.e. from that of antagonism *vis-à-vis* the Congress, to that of accepting its crucial role as a bulwark against the sweep of the peasant movement.

Seen in its totality, the PCC struck compromises and retreated in the face of a strong peasant movement. Its position *vis-à-vis* the question of zamindari abolition illustrates this point most unambiguously.

However, it might well be asked, how could the PCC do all this and yet increase its popularity? This riddle cannot be solved only by locating the manoeuvres of the PCC or its ability to regulate and demobilize the peasant movement. It is here that we have to turn to popular perceptions which identified the Congress as an instrument of struggle, and the way the Congress appealed to popular imagination by accommodating a wide variety of concepts and beliefs ranging from what was located as *swaraj* or the desire to gain respectability by being associated with the Congress, to the complexities associated with the Hinduisation of tribals. And, after the elections this process was also accompanied by the expectations from 'our ministry' which would solve all problems. And, given all this one can perhaps explain how the PCC reaped the harvest of the movements in this phase, in spite of its compromises and retreats. Consequently, the consolidation of the depth of the national movement co-existed with the hegemonisation of the peasants and tribals by the Congress. One can, however, end by adding that this process was marked by an unevenness; if one keeps the Jeypur estate in mind.<sup>144</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Gandhi visited Orissa in 1934. I was told that Bhagabati Charan Pannigrahi could not reconcile himself to the Gandhian 'retreats' and 'compromises'. Interview: Kalindi Charan Pannigrahi (Cuttack; June 1981), the elder brother of Bhagabati.
2. Surendranath Dwivedy, *Quest for Socialism: Fifty years of Struggle in India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 29-30.

3. Ibid, p. 59
4. Home Political 18/10/1933 (National Archives, New Delhi), hereafter H.P. We should add here that Mahtab was also involved in the Harijan upliftment programme and as mentioned by him in *Sadhanara Pathe* (Oriya; Cuttack, 1972) p. 154, he kept a Harijan servant (!), after his father's death, in line with this programme.
5. Indulal Jainik Paper, subject file 14, p. 2, (hereafter, IYSF 14) Nehru Memorial Library and Museum, Private Papers Section (New Delhi). This was a report on the Utkal Kisan Sabha, drafted around mid-1939.
6. *Sarathi*, 19 March, 1934.
7. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 2.
8. Ibid, p. 3.
9. S.N. Dwivedy, op. cit., p. 52.
10. This narrowing down of the gulf was an extremely important facet. IYSF 14 p. 3 mentions the role of *Sarathi* for preparing the ideological background to work with the peasants.
11. Ibid, p. 5.
12. Ibid, p. 3.
13. Accession No. 33 (hereafter Acc.No.) (Special Branch Police Reports) Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneshwar, p. 2.
14. M.A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Sabha* (Calcutta, 1974) p. 4-5.
15. Mahtab, op. cit., p. 176, mentions that it was mostly the Socialists who worked seriously for the PCC.
16. Dwivedy, op. cit., p. 65-66.
17. Acc. No. 33, op.cit., p. 1-14.
18. Dwivedy op.cit., p. 68
19. Acc. No. 33, op.cit., p. 14-45.
20. Ibid p. 22.
21. Dwivedy op.cit., p. 69. We can cite here as examples, Chakradhar Behera (Kanika estate) and even Biswanath Das who became the first Prime Minister.
22. HP 18/10/1936 and P.N. Chopra (ed.), *Towards Freedom 1937-47* (New Delhi, 1985) from Hubback to Linlithgow. 1 February 1937, p. 81-84.
23. IYSF 7. In fact, the PCC's agrarian manifesto was the most radical one; interview: Sarat Pattnaik (Cuttack, December 1980)
24. Bipan Chandra, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Capitalist Class, 1936' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. X, August 1975, sees this period as the most radical phase of Nehru.
25. H.P. file No. 4/38/36 gives us an insight into Nehru's tour. Besides asking people to vote for the Congress, Nehru launched a frontal attack on both imperialism and feudalism.
26. Ibid. In fact, this seems to have surprised the colonial authorities.
27. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 4-5; Acc. No. 33, op. cit., p. 35-36.
28. H.P. 18/11/1936.
29. S.N. Mozumdar, *Report on the General Elections in Orissa-1937* (Cuttack, 1937) p. 14-16.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid p. 15.
32. H.P. 18/2/1937; this happened in the Jeypur zamindari.
33. Chopra (ed.) op. cit., p. 81-84.
34. Mozumdar, op. cit., p. 14-15, H.P. 18/1/1937; 18/2/1937; Chopra (ed.) op. cit., p. 81-84.
35. Mozumdar, op. cit., p. 14. In fact, 32 of the defeated candidates forfeited their deposits; Ibid p. 31.

36. All India Congress Committee, Private Papers Section, Nehru Memorial Library and Museum (New Delhi), p. 21 and p. 22, part III, 1937, Mahtab to Kriplani, 15/2/1937; thus, even someone like Mahtab was looked upon suspiciously.
37. *Congress Socialist*, 20 March, 1937.
38. H.P. 18/1/1937; 18/2/1937; thus, the tribals of the Jeypur zamindari stopped paying the plough tax; Acc. No. 33; 34, shows a great deal of enthusiasm to get recruited as Congress members.
39. *Congress Socialist*, 14 May, 1937.
40. Acc. No. 34 op. cit., 64, 67.
41. Ibid p. 68.
42. H.P. 18/5/1937; Linlithgow papers, microfilm, op. cit., Hubback to Linlithgow, 18 June, 1937.
43. IYSF 14 op. cit., p. 6; Acc. No. 34, p. 69; Linlithgow, microfilm, 16 May 1937 op. cit.; *Congress Socialist* 14 May, 1937; 5 June 1937.
44. Mahtab, op. cit., p. 166.
45. Acc. No. 34 op. cit., p. 54-64.
46. IYSF 14, p. 6.
47. *Congress Socialist*, 5 June, 1937.
48. For example, Acc. No. 34, p. 64, mentions of how the Kisan Sangha convinced the Lok Sabha of Delang (Puri) to identify itself with the Sangha, instead of trying to redress grievances of peasants constitutionally as planned by the Sabha.
49. *Report on the Land Revenue Administration of The District of North Orissa for the Year 1936-37* (Cuttack, 1938) p. 8, 11.
50. H.P. 18/1/1938.
51. Acc. No. 34 p. 71.
52. This was released through the press around the beginning of July, 1938; Acc. No. 34, p. 73.
53. Acc. No. 34 p. 79; B. Das made this statement at a gathering of five thousand people in the Puri town in early August, 1937.
54. Acc. No. 34, p. 74.
55. Acc. No. 29; p. 3; this trend can be observed from about August 1937.
56. *Congress Socialist*, 6 August 1937.
57. IYSF 14, p. 7; *Congress Socialist* 17 September 1937; Acc. No. 29, p. 5-6; H.P. 18/9/1937.
58. *Congress Socialist*, 17 September 1937; Acc. No. 29, p. 8.
59. IYSF 14, p. 7; Acc. No. 29, p. 8, 29; this is clearly visible between September and November, 1937.
60. *Indian Annual Register*, 1937 p. 265-268; hereafter IAR.
61. K.M. Patra, *Orissa Legislature and Freedom Struggle 1912-47* (New Delhi, 1979) p. 118-119.
62. Valmiki Choudhary (ed.) *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents, Vol. I* (New Delhi, 1984) p. 86-87.
63. Interestingly, we may add here that the Congress had supported a ministerial crisis over the appointment of Mr. Dain in the absence of the Governor in May 1937 (i.e. during the minority ministry period) and the central leadership also supported such a policy; Patra, op. cit., p. 112.
64. *Congress Socialist*, 22 July 1938.
65. IAR 1938, p. 351.
66. Patra, op. cit., p. 125.
67. *Orissa Legislative Assembly proceedings, Vol. II, Part I, 1938* (Cuttack, 1938) p. 901; hereafter OLAP.
68. Acc. No. 29, p. 17.
69. OLAP, Vol. II, Part II, p. 938, p. 1230.
70. *Congress Socialist*, 26 November, 1937.

71. IYSF 14 op. cit., 7; IAR, 1938, p. 351. The Orissa Tenancy Amendment Bill was enforced on 1 November 1938.
72. IYSF 14 op. cit., p. 7.
73. Patra op. cit., p. 131-134.
74. IYSF 14 op. cit., p. 11.
75. Chopra (ed.) op. cit., p. 1194-1195, Nehru to Pant (25 November 1937) reflects on the general nature of this problem. As felt by Nehru: 'I am greatly distressed at the turn of events . . . If I may put it in technical language, the Congress ministries are tending to become counter-revolutionary'.
76. H.P. 18/10/1937; Acc. No. 29. p. 30 (17 November, 1937)
77. Acc. No. 29 op. cit., p. 20 (5 October, 1937).
78. H.P. 18/12/1937.
79. Rajendra Prasad Private Papers, microfilm, roll no. 5, NMML; (hereafter, R.P.) in response to Nityananda Kanungo (Minister of Revenue and Public Works, Orissa) to Prasad—6 December, 1937, Prasad suggested Nilakantha Das' name—11/12/1937.
80. Linlithgow, microfilm, op. cit., August-December 1938, from Raja of Khallikote to Prasad (7 August, 1938).
81. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 14 January 1938.
82. R.P. op. cit., Biswanath Das to Prasad, 12 December, 1937. Thus, rents had been assessed as high as Rs 12 to Rs. 18 per acre and Das was conscious of the fact that this was a wrong thing since, 'It was one of our election pledges that we give them (i.e. peasants) relief'.
83. H.P. 18/12/1937—Biswanath Das' Statement; Rajkrishna Bose at a meeting (Mahanga, 28 November 1937) also expressed a similar position, and focussed on the 'middlemen'.
84. *Krushak* 13 January, 1938.
85. Acc. No. 29 op. cit., p. 34.
86. Ibid, op. cit., 29 (17 November 1937).
87. *Krushak* 13, 20, 27, January 1938.
88. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 10 mentions how the Kisan Sangha was not allowed to develop in Jeypur and Ganjam; Acc. No. 29, p. 16 (7 October, 1937) R.K. Biswasroy visited different areas in the Jeypur estate and advised the people not to pay taxes till the crops were cut.
89. Acc. No. 29, op. cit., p. 32 (27 November, 1937); H.P. 18/9/1937; *Krushak* January 13, 1938.
90. Acc. No. 29, op. cit., p. 17-18; H.P. 18/10/1937.
91. H.P. 18/12/1937.
92. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 8, Acc. No. 29, op. cit., p. 13 (September 27, 1937), p. 25 (3 November, 1937; p. 35 (3 December, 1937).
93. *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence*. . . , op. cit., Vol. II, p. 233-239, from Godavaris Misra to Prasad (24 March 1958).
94. H.P. 18/12/1937; Acc. No. 29, op. cit., p. 21 (27 October, 1937) p. 27-28 (10 November, 1937), IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 8.
95. H.P. 18/11/1937 and 'Communist Conspiracy Against the Congress Socialist Party', 9 May 1938, 49-C (1938) at the P.C. Joshi Memorial Archives (New Delhi) point to a tension within the 'left' wing itself, especially centred around the 'slide back' of Nabakrushna Choudhury who was viewed as a 'reactionary' by some.
96. Mahtab, *Sadharana* . . . , op. cit., p. 166.
97. *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence*. . . , op. cit., Vol. II, p. 5, Mahtab to Prasad, 24 January, 1938.
98. H.P. 18/2/1938.
99. H.P. 18/4/1938.
100. Ibid; Acc. No. 30 30 (6 April, 1938)

101. *National Front* 24 April, 1938. In fact, P.C. Joshi pointed to this serious omission.
102. H.P. 18/3/1938; 18/4/1938; Acc. No. 38-April, May 1938, *Krushak*, 20 January 1938. locates peasant militancy of Tirtol to have been precipitated as a result of a landlord beating a peasant at Govindpur (Tirtol); *Congress Socialist*, 18 March, 1938.
103. *Report on the Land Revenue*. . . , op. cit., 1937-38 (Cuttack, 1939) p. 9-10.
104. *Krushak*, 19 February, 1938, pointed to this in its editorial.
105. For example, H.P. 18/7/1938 reported Biswanath Das addressing a large gathering at Jenapur (Cuttack district) on 14 July where he deprecated the use of slogans like 'Destruction to the Zamindari system' as well as the 'violence' of the Kisan Sangha, and advised peasants to pay their due to the landlords.
106. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 11, mentioned: 'The Kisans of these parts now look upon the ministry for delivering them some boon. They are forgetting their task of fighting their enemy. The enemy has made room for their own Minister. The enemy no longer appears before them. They are now face to face with their own Ministry whom they must not fight but always ask of favours'. As can be seen, this hegemonisation implied a dampening of the anti-imperialist struggle as well.
107. This happened from about June 1938.
108. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 4; as pointed out: 'The approved list (of members appointed by the top leadership) would be pressed in the Kisan Committee, and carried. Insistence on having the Committee democratically elected, would mean disruption'.
109. *Report on the Land Revenue*. . . , op. cit., 1936-37, p. 8; 1957-38, op. cit., p. 11; 1938-39 (Cuttack, 1940), p. 7.
110. Report on . . . ibid, 1937-38, p. 9-10.
111. *Krushak*, 20 January, 1938.
112. H.P. 18/7/1938.
113. *IAR* 1942, p. 154.
114. Ibid.
115. H.P. 4/13/1938.
116. H.P. 18/10/1938.
117. H.P. 18/6/1938.
118. H.P. 4.13.1938 H.P. 18/11.1938.
119. B. Singh Deo, *The Goti System in Jeypur Agency* (Jeypur, 1938) p. 7. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate his paper on *bethi*.
120. H.P. 18/11/1938; H.P. 4/13/1938; Interview: Damodar Samantarai (Jeypur, June 1981).
121. S. Sanganna, 'Revolts in Orissa—Martyr Laxman Naik: A Hero of the Freedom Movement'; in V. Raghavaiah (ed.) *Tribal Revolts* (Nellore, 1971), p. 249.
122. H.P. 18/1/1939; 18/2/1939; 18/4/1939; Acc. No. 38, February, June, 1939.
123. Mahtab et.al., *Report of the Orissa State's Enquiry Committze* (Cuttack, 1939) p. 59, recommended that the princely states should be converted to permanently-settled estates without violating the rights of the chiefs, thereby indicating the new position.
124. IYSF 14, op. cit., p. 4-5.
125. *IAR* 1939, p. 405.
126. H.P. 18/4/1939; 18/5/1939; Acc. No. 38, 10 February, 1939, 22 May, 1939.
127. H.P. 18/4/1939.
128. H.P. 18/6/1939.
129. *National Front*, 27 August, 1939; Acc. No. 38, 22 September, 1939; H.P. 18/10/1939.
130. *Report on the Land Revenue* . . . , 1939 op. cit., (Cuttack, 1940), p. 7-8.
131. Acc. No. 38, 8 April, 1939.
132. H.P. 18/8/1939; 18/9/1939.



133. H.P. 18/10/1939.
134. *National Front*, 12 February, 1939.
135. Ibid, 25 December 1939. The Congress Ministry resigned on 4 November 1939.
136. H.P. 18/11/1939; 18/12/1939; Acc. No. 38, 8 November 1939.
137. K. Gopalankutty, 'The Task of Transforming the Congress in Malabar, 1934-40' in *Studies in History* July-December 1989 also identifies a similar movement developing in Malabar; p. 177. However, his method tends to dichotomise class struggle and the anti-imperialist struggle (see p. 193). This raises a serious theoretical and practical problem. Is it possible to dichotomise anti-imperialism and class struggle, and concentrate on locating primary and secondary structures? Was not a struggle against a moneylender or a landlord also a struggle against the British?
138. This is also applicable for the princely states; for details see Biswamoy Pati, 'Peasants, Tribals and the National Movement in Orissa (1920-50)' Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Delhi, 1989 (unpublished) chap. 3.
139. One should also mention here the powerful upsurge launched by the Prajamandal in the princely states; for details, Pati thesis, op. cit., chap. 3.
140. This is especially visible in the creative productions of the 1930-40 decade—a phase which blurred categories such as the 'intellectual', the 'activist' and the 'creative writer'; for details see Biswamoy Pati, 'The High:Low Dialectic: Peasant in Oriya Literature' in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8 April, 1989.
141. For details, B. Pati, 'Peasants, Tribals and the National Movement in Orissa, 1921-1936' in Kapil Kumar (ed.) *Congress and Classes* (New Delhi, 1988).
142. Women also figure in this phase as victims of terror and refugees from the oppressive princely states like Dhenkanal and Talcher; for details see Pati thesis, op. cit., chap. 3.
143. In fact, Orissa offers a sharp contrast to other parts, since the PCC's position was quite radical and the zamindars were on the opposite side of the fence during the election. One can cite here Lance Brennan, 'From One Raj to Another: Congress Politics in Rohilkhand, 1930-50' in D.A. Low (ed.) *The Congress and the Raj* (London, 1977). Thus, Brennan locates the Congress election campaign to be based on a moderate agrarian reform programme and mentions that apart from Moradabad, zamindars were selected as Congress candidates from each district of Rohilkhand; p. 478-479. Similarly neighbouring Bihar offers a sharp contrast since the abolition of the zamindari system did not surface in the election manifesto of the Bihar PCC in spite of the strong sweep of the peasant movement; see, for example, Stephen Henningham, *Peasant Movements in Colonial India: North Bihar 1917-1942* (Canberra, 1982) chap. 6.
144. One can also add that this feature is visible in the case of the Nilgiri state where the Communists had projected an alternative through sustained struggles in the Prajamandal movement; Pati thesis, op. cit., chap. 3 for details.

## *Crisis of Governability?*

Atul Kolhi, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, price Rs 495

The field of political analysis has been sought to be hegemonized by the American Social Science establishment since the end of the second world war. The hegemonization has been carried out in two ways—one, agendas have been laid down as to how political phenomenon have to be studied—in other words it is held that this is the mode of explanations as how the social and the political world can be appropriated by theory. Agendas are modes of power because they lay down the frontiers of understanding, they dictate not only which problems are to be posed, they dictate how the problem has to be posed and they dictate which problem is not to be posed. The second way this is done is to demolish other ways of understanding and comprehension. The attempt has been underwritten by the establishment of various committees under the patronage of the Social Science Research Council. Why we in the post-colonial world accept such agendas is a question which belongs to the domain of the sociology of knowledge, but that we do is undeniable—maybe it is the lack of confidence in our own attempts to chart out our own agendas, maybe it is the lure of foreign funding at prestigious universities in the US which go a long way in our subsequent career graphs or maybe it is the outpouring of publications from abroad under reputed publishing houses, or simply, as I suspect, because the kind of work been done in our countries does not have access to wide publicity or distribution systems, or maybe it is all for which impels us to follow agendas laid down in the US to understand our own societies.

Agendas have been laid down and followed since the establishment of the Committee on Comparative Politics by the American Social Science Research Council in the mid 1950's. So much has been written about the causes for the setting up of the committee and sources of its funding that a recapitulation is unnecessary, the point is that both

\* Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

academics and the policy planning establishment in the post-colonial world accepted the research and the recommendations there as the gospel truth. Thus the focus on modernization and political development which came to us in waves from the American Universities and visiting academics. Modernization and political and economic development became the locus of both theory and practice. The high point came when Samuel P Huntington in a critique of the modernization perspective pointed out that the exploding aspirations of the people of 'the 'Third World' constituted an overload on fragile institutions. Social mobilization, he suggested should keep apace with the level of institutionalization or the consequence would be a breakdown of the system. It was a conservative stance since it emphasized the need to keep social consciousness in line with the kind of institutions available, it implied a lowering of participation if states had to function ably—a roll back stance as it were, since in a major part of the post colonial world it meant that the participation sparked off by the anti-colonial struggle was to be deliberately neutralized. (Ironically enough about five years later the Trilateral Commission on the Crisis of Governability of which Huntington was one of the authors pointed out to the same malaise in the advanced capitalist world, governments there, it suggested, were burdened by an overload on the system). It laid the basis for an acceptance of authoritarian regimes and the attempts to control social consciousness, a case where political analysis becomes a recipe for the ruling classes. Analysis can never be innocent of practical politics, it results in sometimes uncomfortable consequences for the analyst.

The most important development in the charting out of agendas was the taking out of the state from political analysis and its substitution by a plethora of terms such as systems etc. Political Science, declared the magistrates of mainstream social science, was to be emancipated of its normative concerns and made value free since values clutter up the methodological and cognitive field. I still remember the utter confusion my generation was cast into when as post-graduate students and subsequently young teachers we were told authoritatively by those who were responsible for syllabi that we had to dispense with the value oriented and normative concerns of classical political theory and engage with new and often mechanistic vocabularies if we wanted to be in line with trendy political science. The state was not to be touched as a conceptual object and this I may remark was at a time when the Indian state was indulging in the most brutal and unmediated encounters with the Naxalite movement protesting against the kind of state that had evolved since the heady days of post-independence.

Hegemonies are unfortunately for the hegemonizer consistently subverted, the really exciting work in political science came to be carried out outside the ambit of the mainstream American Social Science Research establishment in the Miliband-Poulantzas debate.

The spatial setting of political science shifted to the Continent in the theory of Poulantzas, the State-Derivationist theorists in Germany, the re-reading of Gramsci, the discovery of Foucault and now in the field of post-structuralism. But more excitingly the intellectually colonized world discovered itself in the anguish of an Andre—Gunder Frank in the realization that what we had was the development of underdevelopment, in the findings of Alavi that the post-colonial state was but an extension of the colonial state, in the debates on the modes of production, in the work on authoritarian populism by Laclau, in the steady and insistent focus on the nature of the post-colonial state. The state banished by the Committee on Comparative Politics had found its way to the center of theory and research, the return of the state was the return of the classic concerns of political theory, it was a return of a perspective which demanded that an understanding of the state preceded an understanding of the way in which it could be transformed, it was the return of praxis to political theory.

As state-centric theory evolved and a focus on the state abstracted from wider politics, gave way to a concern with the manner in which society organizes itself and subverts existing states—as in the shift of Poulantzas from the state as a factor of social cohesion to the state as an arena of class struggle; as it was being discovered that the impetus, the force for changes in states comes from society, after it was understood that a theory of society necessarily precedes a study of the state since the latter is the political organization of the former, the American Social Science Research Council decided on *Bringing the State Back*. In an intellectual ambience where state centric theory had been found wanting at least in the sense that the notion of the state had to be expanded, in an environment where the limits of the state were being discussed, in a world where multiple social movements were posing a challenge to the state and to all orthodoxies; in an intellectual persuasion where *people were being brought back in*; in an atmosphere where in the post-colonial world the state was being taken out of the economic and now the political arena courtesy the World Bank and the IMF, Social Scientists of the persuasion of Theda Skocpol (1979, 1985; Krasner 1978;) Nordlinger 1981, 1988; Evans 1985; Rueschemeyer 1985) decided that society centered perspectives were a product of the nineteenth century and should be dispensed with. It was argued that the Twentieth Century had seen the emergence of the state as an autonomous social actor as witnessed in the *Keynsian* state and the post-colonial state and international developments had privileged the state, therefore it was not society but the state which had to be given explanatory priority. It is a moot point that the same situation in a sharper form had existed in the mid-1950's when the state has been banished by the earlier members empowered by the same Social Science Research Council, but never mind it is never too late to learn. It is within this statist perspective that Atul Kohli places himself,

though his work is influenced by Huntington's thesis and is clearly also influenced by the report of the Trilateral Commission. It is the statist perspective that comes out as the dominant influence, though he distances himself from it in trying to explain the process by which the state evolves and also attempts to emphasize socio-economic forces, his study he is at pains to stress, 'makes a deliberate attempt to correct the distortions often generated by overemphasis on the state' (p.10) In the end he is more statist, even more Huntingtonian, than he cares to admit.

The statist perspective takes the debate on the relative autonomy of the state to its logical and somewhat painful end, the state is seen as autonomous of society and in this perspective state and society are presented as polar opposites. It thus renounces the preoccupation of the Marxists with placing the state in a specific social formation, as also the preoccupation of the Liberals in charting out how social forces impact the state (for a critique of how this school has misread pluralism see Almond: 1988, for a critique of the way in which it has misread Marxist theory see Cammack; 1989, 1990). It is excessively concerned with establishing the autonomy of politics either from social or from economic forces. Politics is seen as an autonomous variable. Secondly, the statist school emphasizes the capacities of the state in managing and manipulating society, in bringing society into congruence with the state. Thirdly, it identifies the state rather narrowly with the administrative and coercive mechanisms of government, a great deal of conceptual confusion is generated by the identification of the state with government and even with its officials. Fourthly, it not only neglects the influence public opinion but also rules out the desirability of public opinion impacting the state. Fifthly, it is not at all concerned with the way in which social forces are constructed, acquire hegemony and are contested in civil society and their consequent impact upon the state. Sixthly it has no understanding of how the working out of social forces make states irrelevant, as the colonial state became irrelevant, or indeed as the states in East Europe and the erstwhile Soviet Union became irrelevant as a consequence of peoples movements that emerged independently of the state, or how states in Asia, Africa and Latin America have shown to be illegitimate by popular struggles.

Kohli escapes these kinds of cul de sacs because he does concentrate on the kind of reverberation on society caused by state actions and the consequence for the state. He does in this way treat social and state interaction as dynamic and evolving. But his perspective is essentially the point of view of someone who is concerned about enhancing the capacities of the Indian state in (a) managing development and (b) that of reconciling competitive political pressures. The explosion of social pressures upon the state is seen as—to use an outmoded terminology—dysfunctional. Though he is at pains to emphasize that he is *not* advocating a curtailment of democracy—One unsettling

conclusion of this study is that India's democracy has itself contributed to overpoliticization of the Indian polity. The prescription that follows this argument, however, definitely is not that democracy should be curtailed in India. This study is primarily analytical, aimed at exploring the causes of India's increasing political turmoil' (p. 20) the emphasis is on the kind of strains this democratization has created for the state and its capacities. As has been pointed out earlier analysis cannot be innocent, it is of necessity value laden and does in very many cases lead to policy prescription which may horrify the analyst. *In other words he tells us a great deal about the kind of politics needed for a state to survive and discharge its functions of managing, coopting, neutralizing dissent, he does not consider the kind of state needed by the people in their expression of dissent through politics.* The state is seen as basically sound, as possessing functions in the discharge of which it can gain legitimacy. That the state as it has evolved in India needs to carry out drastic changes in its own structures and modes of functioning is not considered. It is this which is the problem with state centric theory, in its obsession with realism it overlooks the fact that state theory has always been normative i.e. in not only the kind of politics that have developed, he does not interrogate the kind of state we have but the kind of state we need. Kohli interrogates the kinds of state we have, except that in the excessive concern with the personalization of power it has failed to develop democratic institutions (p. 17).

The point I must hasten to add is well taken, institutions are important and in the absence of institutions political pressures take unhealthy directions, violence, competition over short term gains, and the increased coercion of the state, as well as the vesting of an immense amount of discretion in the persons in power to mediate between demands. The point is that institutions in a political structure which is impaired by its limited social concerns will continue to have little relevance. Institutions in an inegalitarian polity will continue to discard, to marginalize, to exclude and the process of democratization will of necessity raise fresh demands and lead to repeated crisis. The sickness that marks the Indian polity requires surgery not ointment. Institutions to be relevant have to be radically decentralized to give the people enough participation, they have to be based on structural changes bringing about economic and social equality to perform their role.

These points are not touched upon by the author in his obsession with emancipating the political from any kind of social or economic considerations. Thus though he does admit that socio-economic factors are important he continues to neglect them in his analysis. In fact he ties himself up in knots in telling us what factors should be primary—'it is eminently clear that in the general explanation developed here, political variables play roles as significant as those of socio-economic

forces, if not more significant. Both the dislocative impact of economic development and growing class conflict have contributed to India's problem of governability. *Neither of these socio-economic variables however has been decisive.* The forces that also have been significant are best thought of collectively as political forces: the roles of leaders, the impact of weak political institutions, and most important, mobilization of new groups for purposes of winning power and securing access to the state's resources. *None of these political forces is fully reducible to explanation by the underlying socioeconomic conditions'* (p. 19, emphasis mine). The problem of those who look for the autonomy of politics is that they forget that politics is about the control of resources and control over the life chances of individuals. Kohli goes on to state that unlike the European experience from which developmental and Marxist arguments originate the role of the state looms large in India's political scene. He forgets that recent Marxist theory has been concerned about this very aspect of the state, its role in appropriating resources and competing with the capitalist classes in the economic arena, however, whereas Marxists assume that a state is constrained in the ultimate instance by the system and therefore politics has to be about the manner in which this system is constructed and maintained, Kohli insists on regarding politics as having to do with the reproduction of political power by itself as if power whether social or political or economic is not intertwined. He himself agrees that 'Access to the power of the state is bitterly contested, not only for the political ends of exercising power and influencing policy but also as a source of livelihood and rapid upward mobility—Thus, the conventional distinction between the state and the market, or between the public and the private spheres of activity, are not clear cut as in the case of India' (p. 20). If the market as the arena of activity and the state as that of politics cannot be disentangled, then there is little sense in disentangling the economic and the political and privileging the latter.

The author seems to be obsessed by authority structures. Conflict is thus seen not in terms of control over economic resources and the symbols of such power, it is seen as in terms of a breakdown of traditional patterns of authority and the absence of any new institutions after 1967 to replace them. This has resulted in an eruption of social discontent fuelled by the democratization process and the resistance of the hitherto marginalized classes to accept their lot any longer—'Electoral competition has mobilized many formerly passive socio-economic groups and brought them into the political arena—But given the states limited capacities for redistribution of wealth and the intensity with which electoral support has been coveted, these mobilized and dissatisfied groups have further contributed to the growing political turmoil' (p 18). This has resulted in social breakdowns. Witness his emphasis on the erosion of authority

structures and the absence of any alternative kinds of structures to control social ferment at the district level. The underlying argument is somewhat sinister, i.e. social forces should be controlled by one or the other authority structures not by a democratic process where *what these forces are saying should be heard and acted upon.*

The irony of India's political economic situation is tragic: the state is highly centralized and omnipresent, but the leverage of its leaders to initiate meaningful change has diminished, the main reason for this development is that authority has seldom run deep, and the authority-structures have in recent years fallen into disrepair. As a result, state authorities have little ability to persuade the people to support government initiatives-to build consensus. (p. 16)

Again and again the theme is that politics has to be a controlled process, otherwise the existing capacity of the government will be destroyed—the Huntington thrust is evident despite all the slashing that it has received at the hands of its critics. Patterns of authority are important in the control of political forces to Kohli, not democratic control of institutions and over the leadership.

Social conflict at the state level is seen to lie in intra-elite competition, the focus on elites misses out on many other things, what is missing here is the searing pain of what these elites have done to the people of India, what they have done in the name of development, what horrors they have perpetuated in the name of elections—communalism, caste wars, assaults on the dignity of women, continued exploitation, consistent marginalization. Bihar is of course marked by this kind of intra-elite competition, yet the constant upsurge in the state is not only due to this. Kohli does not remark enough on the insistent poverty of Bihar, on the exploitation of the people which has led them to take up arms, on the caste wars which has led to the same result, on the absence of any meaningful land reform which has recycled the vicious circle of poverty and helplessness. The problem with focusing on intra-elite competition is that it does not see the grass roots, or even distinguish between the various kinds of politics. The Naxalite movement in Bihar may be dysfunctional for the state or the national government, but who cares except the mandarins of the South Block, the Naxalites have helped the dispossessed to regain some semblance of dignity, they have mobilized them against caste oppression and they have helped them to fight for their rights. governability one is compelled to remark to the learned Professor is not only in the ability to retain the initiative in every matter, it is in the effort to devote energies to the dispossessed, to the marginalized to the historically deprived. The crisis of Governability is the complete and total failure of the Indian state to show any sensitivity to the needs of the Indian people. Similar is the analysis of West Bengal, the ability



of the Left Government to create and channelize public opinion is not only due to its party structure which has helped it to mediate challenges, it is the result of land reforms, of economic restructuring, of the commitment of the leadership to respond to felt needs. If efficient institutions to manage political turmoil is the only requirement an efficient polity needs, then authoritarian states are the best forms of conflict management is the somewhat uncomfortable implication.

Finally the crisis of governability to the author, is not that the Indian state has proved to be incapable to grant to its people the minimum standard of livelihood, that it has failed to move the people to come together in a concentrated and collective effort to work for themselves, that the majority of people have lost faith in the political will of the elites, that the political vacuum that has been created in civil society is being filled in by the most vicious of creeds such as communalism and casteism, it has everything to do with the loss of manageability. This is traced to the breakdown of the Congress system and the inability of any other party to take its place. Crises of governability are fundamentally related to the perceptions of the people that the governments of any hue are incapable of delivering the goods, India's crisis is constituted by the fact that governments are there for the spoils, whether it is a VP Singh or a Chandrashekhar or a Narasimha Rao, governments have lost their legitimacy. Political vacuums are caused not only by an absence of leadership structures but in the loss of legitimacy of all leaders, in the profound disenchantment with all leaders unless they prove their commitments. This is proved by the grass roots struggles many of which have charted out their own paths whether in the construction of small dams or in the take over of land or in the mobilization against the caste system. People will follow their own methods of dealing with a system where they have been increasingly been marginalized either by opting out or by gaining knowledge of how to work the system. I agree with the author that the danger is that in the absence of an integral principle to unite and channelize these politics the dangers are immense but these politics have to be heard and not merely channelized. There is a saying in West Africa that where the states hear the wails and not the whispers political catastrophe will follow, this hearing of whispers is what is required but this requires a different kind of politics not a strengthening of existing institutions.

Kohli's book is eminently readable, it is ambitious but not pretentious and this is its strength. The author is also to be congratulated for the kind of meticulous empirical research he has done, seldom is this kind of research to be found in the authoritative works on India. His diagnosis and the remedies suggested have to be taken seriously. The problem as I have tried to show is that a statist perspective is a top down one and has to be tempered by a recognition of the perspectives and the solutions offered by the people. Their

struggles, what they are saying, what they want has to be seen and heard and a perspective that focuses on the functional or the dysfunctional nature of these politics for stability, for governability, for survival of the state misses out on this.

## REFERENCES

- Almond Gabriel A: (1988)—'The Return to the State' *American Political Science Review* Vol 82, No 3 September.
- Cammack Paul (1989):—'Review Article : Bringing the State Back In' *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 29, April.
- (1990) :—'Statism and the new Institutionalism' *Socialist Register*:—*The Retreat of the Intellectuals*. (London Merlin)
- Evans P, Rueschemeyer D and Skocpol T (1985):—*Bringing the State Back in* (New York and Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)
- Krasner Stephen (1978):—*Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and US Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press)
- (1984) 'Approacher to the State, Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics' Review Article' *Comparative—Politics* January
- Nordlinger Eric A (1981):—*On the Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge Harvard University Press)
- (1988) 'The Return to the State: Critiques' *American Political Science Review* Vol. 82, No 3, September.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Meaning and Interpretation*

Umberto Eco with Richard Torty, Jonathan Culler, Christine Rose-Brooke, *Interpretation and Over-Interpretation*, Edited by Stefan Collini, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The present volume provides invaluable access to contemporary debates about meaning, interpretation and the possibility of over-interpretation. It comprises the 1990 Tanner Lectures delivered by Umberto Eco, as also the papers presented by three participants at the ensuing seminar. Eco's Reply completes the volume. Stefan Collini's introduction is commendable as much for its well selected background information as for its restraint in not imposing a perspective on the reader. The texts are allowed to speak for themselves. The directness of presentation and engagement immediately confront one adding a refreshing tension to the act of reading itself.

Going into the 'archaic roots' of the contemporary debate on meaning ('most post-modern thought will look very pre-antique') Eco argues that the rationalist 'modus' and that which 'escapes the norm' have, since the days of Graeco-Roman antiquity, been dialectically related in the history of human thought. Consequently, recognising the potentially unlimited range of interpretation does not imply firstly, that interpretation has no object and secondly, that every act of interpretation can have a 'happy end'. To interpret a text, states Eco, is 'to explain why words can do various things (and not others).'

Developing a sort of Popperian principle, Eco claims that even if there are no rules that allow one to ascertain which interpretations are the 'best', and therefore, authoritative ones, there are criteria for determining which are 'bad' ones. 'Over-interpretations typically fail to reject apparent similarities (possible between anything and any other) as irrelevant even when this relation is recognisably minimal. Attributing maximal possibilities in such cases renders the 'wonder' motivating the interpreter closer to 'paranoia' than to a creative sundering of culturally established norms of significance.

Eco defines the text as a 'device conceived in order to produce its model reader'. At the same time the 'initiative' of the model reader

consists in figuring out the 'mode' not the empirical author, that in the end coincides with the 'intention of the text'. This strategy, admittedly that of the ancient hermeneutic circle, respects the text while making the intentions of the empirical author radically useless.

Accordingly Eco draws a distinction between interpreting and using a text. The former involves recognition of and rendering explicit, the strategy of the text given its cultural and lexical background.

Using the example of his own much publicized and interpreted novels, *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*, Eco shows that the 'witness of the empirical author' appears of interest only in understanding the creative process, that is, 'the story of the growth of textual strategy . . . out of a magmatic territory which has nothing—or not yet—to do with literature.' The private lives and intentions of empirical authors are in certain respects far more unfathomable than their texts. Between the 'mysterious history of textual production' and the 'uncontrollable drift' of its future readings the 'text qua text still represents a comfortable presence, the point to which we stick.'

American philosopher Richard Rorty's pragmatic preference dominates his assertion that 'efficacy' rather than 'fidelity' is the point of an interpretation. Impatience with Eco's distinction between interpreting and using texts is evident in his claim that a text has 'just whatever coherence it happened to acquire during the last roll of the hermeneutic wheel', i.e. the particular intentio we happen at the moment to have. Interpretations therefore are no more 'coerced by texts than they are 'imposed' by the economies of our need to persuade ourselves or others. With a characteristically flippant defiance Rorty concludes that "Theory' provides occasion for us to read a lot of first-rate books we might otherwise have missed . . . What 'theory' has not done is to provide a method of reading.'

Jonathan Culler, (comparative literature), rejects this anti-theoretical posture as a denial of 'any public structure of argument' in which a challenge to currently entrenched positions, including Rorty's, could be articulated. Yet he is troubled by Eco's notion of over-interpretation which apparently works against the most interesting forms of modern criticism. The latter makes explicit 'not what the text has in mind but what it forgets'. Limits to interpretation cannot be identified in advance if the emancipatory edge of the need to 'learn more' is not to be diminished.

Christine Brooke-Rose, like Culler from the literary world, continues the focus on interpretation as arena of struggle between authoritarian and emancipatory tendencies. The text is history palimpsest history—an alternative history of fact and magical recreation 'as convincing as the real story'. Where such a text is set up as the authoritative one, other voices are stifled. But where this discouraged such texts float somewhere between the sacred and the

profane in our literature, stretching 'our intellectual, spiritual and imaginative horizons to breaking point.'

Predictably Eco's Reply centres on Rorty's intervention for it confronts his major claim that the rational and the irrational are not, as Rorty and popular 'post-modernism' would have it, mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Defending the rationality of potentially unlimited interpretation Eco illustrates his point with a carefully chosen example:

'the force of the Copernican Revolution is not only due to the fact that it explains some astronomical phenomena better than the Ptolemaic tradition but also to the fact that it—instead of representing Ptolemy as a crazy liar—explains why and on what grounds he was justified in outlining his own interpretation'.

Eco questions Rorty's disdain for the theoretical component of the very creativity he otherwise extolls. Why should utility per se be more respectable than the enquiry that makes it possible? The need to know itself validates the 'marvelling', the 'curiosity' that generates knowledge. In an environment when everything is an 'acquisition', the easier the better, one has tremendous sympathy for Eco's position.

MADHU PRASAD

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Grappling With Indian Reality*

Ramshray Roy and Richard Sisson (ed.), *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, Vols I & II, Sage, New Delhi, 1990. Rs. 300/-

The book comprising two volumes arose out of a conference held at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1987. Unlike other conference papers which vary a great deal in quality, articles included in these volumes are both well-researched and well-argued. Not only will the volumes be useful to scholars striving to grapple with Indian reality, they will also be helpful to the established academics as a readily available reference. By concentrating on the Congress Party, both the volumes delve into issues highlighting the changes within the party in response to the rapidly changing socio-economic scene over time. Instead of describing the development of the party which was an umbrella organization incorporating different, if not contradictory, ideologies, the contributors seek to understand the tension within the party in terms of 'the changing bases of its support'. Not only does it explain the entry of new social groups in the party by reference to the party's policy of expanding its base, the book draws on the explicit desire of the groups, so far untapped politically, to assert in the struggle for power. The introduction of adult suffrage largely accounts for this change. This new trend nonetheless shows the extent to which India's political arithmetic is being transformed rapidly following the emergence of new political forces drawing on primordial loyalties like caste, clan and religion. The Congress Party, in order to gain electorally, exploited these social cleavages to its benefit even to the extent of sacrificing the broad ideological strand for which it fought in the past.

Volume I comprising eleven articles deals with the process through which the Congress has adapted itself so far to the changing environment. Articles written by the eminent social scientists attribute the continuity to, *inter alia*, its capacity of absorbing new political aspirants representing new social groups, into electoral politics.

Not convinced by W.H. Morris-Jones' 'one-dominant party system', or, Rajni Kothari's 'Congress System' as explanatory models, the contributors have drawn our attention to the dialectical interaction

between the Congress and its environment and the transformation of the party in the process. The watershed is probably 1967 when the Congress lost power in a number of states and the process that led to the glorification of an individual leader at the cost of the party. Politically, it was dangerous because the linkages between various levels of political activities, institutionalised over time, were severed and there arose a schism between the party leadership and the led which became unbridgeable with the party's growing dependence on the leaders' charisma. What it brought about was a complete breakdown of the party as an institution and the rise of leaders who developed and were sustained directly by the people at large. The process unleashed thus made the party redundant and contributed significantly to the consolidation of 'one person hegemony' within the party. No longer did the party remain an instrument for political mobilisation; the leaders depended a great deal on various factions to garner support during the elections. B.S. Baviskar in his analysis of the political scene (1952-75) in rural Maharashtra makes this point very convincingly. Given the nature of the study and his training as a sociologist, he would have done a good job had he related the factions with their immediate socio-economic background which, perhaps, would have explained better why a particular *gat* mobilis support for a particular leader.

Similarly, M.P. Singh attributes the changing patterns of roles and representation within the Congress to 'the newly developing collective identities that find expression in social, political or religious movements'. He is probably right in his judgment that collective identities drawn on primordial loyalties 'enhance the appeal to communalism in party strategies'. What remains unexplained is the variation of popular response to appeals instigating communal hatred. The reason lies perhaps in the nature of human consciousness which itself is shaped by the complex interplay of factors involving society, economy and politics. In fact, the new style of politics, signalled by the 1967 breakdown of 'the Congress System' transformed Indian politics from what the Rudolphs identify as 'a mediating to a plebiscitary format'. They are right because, so far, Indian elections have been fought on major political slogans and voters participate in plebiscite to decide on the issues highlighted by the carefully worded slogans. They justified the decline of the Congress both at the state and national level by referring to the entry of new voters who tend to cast vote on consideration other than Congress' contribution to independence. These arguments, familiar to scholars, draw out the complex nature of the voting behaviour in a transitional society like India.

The rest of the articles, barring three dealing with issues relating to voting behaviour in India, are case studies of Congress performance in

elections in the provinces. Both Harry and Subrata Mitra argue that the Congress electoral base keeps changing and hence the application of a particular explanatory model seems most illogical. In view of the emergence of new forces, the party, by accommodating them, shows the extent to which the Congress rubric continues to be an umbrella organisation; it is a party which holds its organisational tentacles all over the country primarily due to its adaptability. In his analysis of the complex state of Madhya Pradesh, Mitra draws on the familiar arguments challenging 'the dominant one party model'. His argument projecting the rise of the two party system in Madhya Pradesh appears to be convincing in view of the recent rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the ruling party there. In fact, the explanation of the changing base of the Congress in terms of an erosion of its vote bank is being challenged by referring to the role of ideology in determining voters' response in elections. There are parties drawing on the constituency which constitutes the Congress vote bank and hence the monocausal explanation emphasising the erosion of vote bank seems dubious.

Drawing on the case studies, Chhibber and Petrocik suggest that 'not only was decentralization taking place in the Indian party system and within the Congress in the late 1960s, but that the Congress party itself was becoming a federation of state-specific social coalitions'. Religion, clan or caste influences the voters : what however becomes decisive is the constellation of factors depending on the state in question. For instance, caste correlates with the Congress vote in the Hindi heart land, while in West Bengal and Kerala, appeal in caste terms hardly pays off. Thus the authors argue that the Congress is the party 'that represents local and not national interests. It is a collection of state based factions linked not by a common constituency but by elites who cooperate in the pursuit of office'. What is probably questionable is the interpretation of election results in terms of elite manipulation, ignoring the role of the voters in projecting an alternative to the existing ruling party which may be remotely related to the elite perception. The argument provided by Chhibber and Petrocik was perhaps valid in the context of one dominant party system or the Congress system. With the expansion of political activities to the hitherto neglected areas, the attempt to grasp the dynamics of Indian politics by reference to only elites is likely to be faulty.

Volume II focusing on the various aspects of the Congress base cutting across ties based on primordial loyalties is qualitatively better in terms of both the treatment of the theme and its articulation. Divided in nine chapters, the volume concentrates on social diversity in its complexity highlighting issues related to the scheduled and backward castes and tribal communities. There are two chapters on the role of the minorities, Muslims in particular, in shaping the Congress ideology.



Not only are these articles well-argued they have also drawn out new dimensions of Congress politics in so far as the Muslims are concerned.

Since it is difficult to deal with each article separately, an attempt will be made to analyse the broad themes, brought out in individual articles. In his article, P.K. Bose has concentrated on the Congress strategy to deal with the political demands the tribals make. Depending on the nature of demand, Bose argues, the Congress employed the strategies of accommodation, appropriation and suppression. That none of the strategies was adequate in effectively dealing with the tribals championing independently their cause even to the extent of arguing for secession. What it probably indicates is the fragility of the Congress strategy to create another vote bank and therefore the process of bringing them to the mainstream as an equal partner has never been seriously undertaken which explains partially the enmity of the Naga National Council or Mizo National Front or even the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

Articles on the politics of backwardness draw our attention to the consequences of extending reservation in job and other concomitant facilities to the backward castes. The arithmetic of voting explains the favorable response of the ruling elites to reservation since it will help them 'extend and consolidate their support base'. Although the reservation scheme is in operation in a number of states, the decision to implement the controversial Mandal Commission Report recommending reservation for the backward castes in the central services has sparked off a serious controversy which, by setting one caste against another, prepared the ground for a caste war. Articles by Ghanashyam Shah and John Wood on Gujarat show the extent to which the reservation policy of the successive governments have consolidated the internal division among the Hindus more than anything else. V.K. Nataraj, dwelling on the political backlash in the form of mass agitations against protective discrimination, has proved his point in the context of Karnataka. Bhagwan Dua's article on the secessionist movements in India draws out the fragility of the politics of appropriation and accommodation in a diverse and diffused society like India. Dua corroborates his argument by reference to the effort of the Congress leadership since the reign of Jawaharlal Nehru. Neither Indira Gandhi nor her successor, Rajiv Gandhi was as successful as Nehru who relied on the strength, stability and experience of state party leaders for coping with separatist forces. The rise and consolidation of fissiparous tendencies in recent years in Punjab, the north-east region and Kashmir show the degree to which Indira Gandhi's 'opportunistic alliance with the secessionist forces and Rajiv Gandhi's 'hasty accord' have failed to neutralise the separatist movements. Whatever the explanation, the tendency towards secession indicates, if not confirms, the limitation of our constitutional arrangement drawing heavily on

the 1935 Government of India Act, in initiating a process which not only assimilates disparate ethnic communities into the mainstream but also provides them with adequate opportunities to develop their unique socio-cultural values.

The collection is a commendable effort towards grasping the complex Indian social and political reality. The editors deserve appreciation for having collected well-researched articles by eminent social scientists who, by concentrating on different various Indian states, have explored new areas of inquiry to understand shifts and twists in a transitional society. As India is a society governed predominantly by traditional forces, but introduced to a completely alien value system in the wake of colonialism, what is necessary is to identify the linkages which appear crucial either in absorbing or rejecting the foreign influences. Both the volumes striving to offer alternative explanations, will therefore be useful to scholars for its rich details and interesting theoretical cues which are certainly welcome in the light of the available stereotype analysis of India's socio-political and economic reality.

BIDYUT CHAKRABARTY  
Department of Political Science  
Delhi University

**WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA &amp; MAYURA

---

---

## SUBSCRIBE TO *Social Scientist*

Please note the changes in subscription rates, which will come into effect with issue no. 221.

You may send the subscription by cheque/draft/money order\*, payable to *Social Scientist*, along with the following details:

Name (in block letters): .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

*Postal address:*

SOCIAL SCIENTIST  
C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016  
Phone: 686 2924

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES (inclusive of postage)\*

Single issue	Rs	15
Double issue	Rs	20
Annual subscription (individuals)	Rs	150
Annual subscription (institutions & libraries)	Rs	200
Annual subscription (students)	Rs	100
Subscription for two years (individuals)	Rs	225
Subscription for three years (individuals)	Rs	300

*Foreign (in US dollars)*

Air mail	\$	60
Sea mail	\$	50

\* Rs 10 extra for outstation cheques.

---

---

**We note with grave concern  
the emergence of  
an explosive situation in our country  
arising from the  
developments in Ayodhya.  
We can no longer be silent spectators  
to the destruction of  
the secular values which have  
sustained us as a Nation.  
We wish to emphasise  
the paramount importance of  
adhering to democratic and  
constitutional norms, and appeal to all  
to rise above the tide of  
hatred and violence.**

---

**SAHMAT**

8, Vithalbhai Patel House, Rafi Marg,  
New Delhi - 110 001 Tel: 3711276

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

Akbar and Technology Irfan Habib	3
Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook: A Critical Reappraisal Iqtidar Alam Khan	16
Akbar's Concept of Sulah-Kul, Tulsi's Concept of Maryada and Dadu's Concept of Nipakh: A Comparative Study Savitri Chandra	31
Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court M. Athar Ali	38
The Profile of Akbar in Contemporary Rajasthani Literature B.L. Bhadani	46
Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat Shirin Mehta	54
SYMPOSIUM Akbar and His Age	61
NOTE Akbar in Pakistani Textbooks Mubarak Ali	73
NOTE Agrarian Structure, Contradiction and Mobilization: A Framework For the Analysis of Emerging Rural Power Partha Nath Mukherji and Bhupati B. Shahoo	77
BOOK REVIEWS	87

---

# **S O C I A L S C I E N T I S T**

VOLUME 20

NUMBERS 9-10

SEPT.-OCT. 1992

## **ADVISORY EDITORS**

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## **CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT**

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## **SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

### **Inland**

Single issue	Rs. 15
Double issue	Rs. 20
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 150
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 200
Annual (students)	Rs. 100
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 225
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 300

(Rs. 10 extra if by outstation cheque)

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## **MANAGING EDITOR**

Rajendra Prasad

## **EDITOR**

Prabhat Patnaik

## **EDITORIAL OFFICE**

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## **Foreign (In US Dollars)**

Annual:	
Air mail	60
Sea mail	50

ISSN 0970 - 0293

The grant for publication from Indian Council of Historical Research is gratefully acknowledged.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial

The current number of *Social Scientist* contains several papers on Mughal Emperor Akbar and his times which were presented at a seminar organised some months ago on his 450th birth anniversary. The question may well be asked: why should *Social Scientist* be so interested in Akbar as to devote a whole issue to him? The decision to do so, we assure the readers, is not a casual one, born out of some necessity to fill up pages in the journal with the help of whatever offerings seminars in the neighbourhood can make, but is a product of careful deliberation. And the reason is two-fold. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are widely considered to mark the genesis of capitalism in Europe. It is not just the Marxist tradition with its emphasis on primitive accumulation of capital which sees that period as something special, but even Keynes who linked the birth of capitalism to the inflow of Spanish gold to the European continent. For anyone interested in the causes of the divergence in the trajectories of development of Europe and India, therefore, this period has a special importance. Given the nature of our journal, we have accordingly an abiding interest in that epoch.

The second and more important reason consists in the fact that recent events have given the period an added significance. When religious-fascism, epitomised by the Hindutva forces, is on the offensive, when the composite culture of the country developed over centuries is being sought to be obliterated, its reassertion and recovery becomes an urgent task. The period of Akbar's regime was a milestone in the development of the composite culture of this region. It is not without reason that in Pakistan, a state founded upon the very rejection of our composite culture, Akbar is either ignored or vilified in history textbooks, as the note by Mubarak Ali, makes clear. For us therefore highlighting this period become urgently necessary, as does the recovery of the entire cultural tradition symbolised by the Sufi-Bhakti poets.

Irfan Habib whose paper on the history of technology had been carried by us in an earlier number, follows it up in this issue by a specific discussion of Akbar and technology. This paper can be 'read' at many levels: for those specifically interested in the history of this period, it is a comprehensive discussion of the subject. At the same time, it implicitly throws up the whole question of the relationship



between the State, technological innovations, and the formation of the so-called 'comparative advantage' that underlies export capabilities, a question which is at the heart of the current debate on economic policy.

The remaining papers are concerned with Akbar's philosophy, ideology and religious policy, all of which reflected his spirit of inquisitiveness and tolerance, and the response they evoked. Iqtidar Alam Khan discusses the formative influences on Akbar's thought and the vicissitudes in the career of the philosophy of *sulh-i-kul* which he evolved. He notices a short passing phase during which Akbar adopted a suppressive attitude towards Islam. He himself however recognised this attitude as negating *sulh-i-kul* and gave it up during the last four years of his regime. Savitri Chandra compares *sulh-i-kul* with the concepts developed by two of Akbar's contemporaries, *Maryada* of Tulsi and *Nipakh* of Dadu. Both Tulsi and Akbar had a hierarchical concept of society, which was in sharp contradiction with the concept of *Nipakh*. Dadu moreover, in opposition to Tulsi, rejected the scriptures and distrusted established religious leaders, a point on which Akbar's stand was ambivalent. Athar Ali's paper throws light on Akbar's grand project of translating into Persian several of the classical Sanskrit texts, the most important of which of course was the *Mahabharata*. The project was a difficult one; the translators were not always equal to the task; and the translations were often not direct but done through the intermediation of Hindi. Nonetheless the project was pursued with vigour at Akbar's personal insistence which is a testimony to the loftiness of his vision. Finally we have two pieces, by B.L. Bhadani and Shirin Mehta which discuss respectively the characterisation of Akbar in contemporary Rajasthani literature and Jain literature in Gujarat.

Apart from these papers, we publish a note by Partha Mukherji and Bhupati Sahoo which suggests a framework for analysing rural struggles in terms of enmeshed structures of asymmetry (exploitation/discrimination) and the possibility of shifts and oscillations in the location of the primary contradiction across different structures of asymmetry.

## *Akbar and Technology*

In April 1580 the Jesuit father Francis Henriques reported from Fatehpur Sikri that 'Akbar knows a little of all trades, and sometimes loves to practise them before his people, either as a carpenter, or as a blacksmith, or as an armourer, filing.'<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Acquaviva soon afterwards (July) referred to Akbar's taking delight in 'mechanical arts'<sup>2</sup> and in September Anthony Monserrate claimed to 'have even seen him making ribbons like a lacemaker and filing, sawing, working very hard.'<sup>3</sup> In his *Commentary* written later, Monserrate recalled that

Zelaldinus (Akbar) is so devoted to building that he sometimes quarries stone himself along with the other workmen. Nor does he shrink from watching and even himself practising for the sake of amusement the craft of an ordinary artisan. For this purpose he has built a workshop near the palace where also are studios and work-rooms for the finer and more reputable arts, such as painting, goldsmith work, tapestry-making, carpet and curtain-making, and the manufacture of arms. Hither he very frequently comes and relaxes his mind with watching those who practise their arts.<sup>4</sup>

These statements by Jesuit witnesses are important, since they suggest that Abu'l Fazl's claims of Akbar's great interest in craft and technology were not mere products of courtly praise. Akbar had a natural inclination towards industrial crafts; and this was undoubtedly a source of his encouragement to technological innovation.

### 'PREFAB' AND MOVABLE STRUCTURES

An early testimony to Akbar's interest in technology comes from 'Arif Qandahari. Writing in 1579, he says:

His high and majestic nature is such that when he journeys, the tents of His Majesty's encampment is loaded on five hundred camels. There are eighteen houses, which have been made of boards of

\* Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University

wood, each including an upper chamber and balcony, that are set up in a suitable and attractive place. At the time of departure, each board is dismantled, and, at the time of encamping, the boards are joined together by iron rings. The insides of these houses are clothed by covers of European brocade and European velvet, and the outside thereof are covered by broadcloth.<sup>5</sup>

The supplementing of texts by wooden boards to create prefabricated and movable structures was an interesting innovation, which, though described later in some detail by Abu'l Fazi, appears to have escaped general attention, especially since Blochmann's translation<sup>6</sup> does not bring out the fact that the structures were essentially of wood, not of cloth or canvas. I offer a fresh translation:

The *A'in* of Encampment and Campaign

It is difficult to describe all of it, but a little of what is arranged during hunting expeditions and journeys to nearby places is put into writing, and an illustrative account offered. First, the *Gulalbar* is a wonderful fortress which His Majesty has created. In it the enclosure is very solid, and passage is closed or opened with lock and key. It is not less than 100 *gaz* by 100 *gaz* in area. On its eastern side, is set up a large tent-hall (*bargah*), with two high masts (*sargha*), containing 54 chambers [i.e. with 54 smaller poles around them], 24 *gaz* in length, 14 *gaz* in width.<sup>7</sup> Inside [the *Gulalbar*], a large wooden *raoti* stands, and around it they have other curtained pavilions. Adjacent to it is put up a two-chambered (*do-ashyana*) wooden building, and that is the place of worship of His Majesty. Outside of it, in select order, 24 wooden *raotis*, each 10 *gaz* in length and 6 *gaz* in width, are raised, each set apart by curtain-walls. Ladies of the Imperial harem find repose there.<sup>8</sup>

What a 'wooden *raoti*' was is duly described a little later in the *A'in-i Farrash Khana*:

The wooden-*raoti* is raised with ten pillars. Each of these is partly buried in the ground, and all are not made equal in height, for those on which the beam rests are slightly higher.<sup>9</sup> The solidity is increased by [wooden] boards (*dasa*) placed above and below [the resting beam], and some rafters are placed over the beam and board. All are attached to each other by iron covers with male and female fits (*human ra ahan jama ba-tarz-i nar-o-madagi paiwand dahad*). The wall and roof are formed by woven bamboo. There are one or two doors, and they set up a [curtained] floor (*suffa*) [in front of the door] according to the size of the lower board (*dasa*). The interior is ornamented by brocade and velvet, and the exterior is girdled by broadcloth and silken tape.

Abu'l Fazl goes on to describe the *do-ashyana*, also mentioned in the initial passage on encampment:

The *do-ashyana* is set up with eighteen pillars. Pillars of six gaz each are raised and wooden boards put over them. To them, by way of male and female fits (*ba-tarz-i nar-o-mada*), pillars of four gaz [in length] are attached; and so the upper room (*bala-khana*) is formed. Its interior and exterior are ornamented in the same way [as the wooden *raoti*]. In expeditions, it serves as the place of the Emperor's bed-chamber.<sup>10</sup>

These extensive translations are offered to show that, as 'Arif Qandahari says, much innovation went in providing materials which could be used instantly to set up wooden structures, and not simply tents. A wood-and-bamboo palace like the 'Wooden *Raoti*' and a double storeyed structure like the *Do-ashyana* could be set up and dismantled at each stage of journey. Blochmann's translation suggests that 'bolts and nuts' were put into use to attach the several parts.<sup>11</sup> If correct, this would be testimony to an early use of screw as an attachment, though even in Europe, the screw did not come into use in carpentry before the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The words, *ahan jama*, iron-cover, are, however, decisive in excluding the screw. Obviously, what we are told of are iron-tubes that clothed the ends of masts and beams, with protrusions ('male') designed to fit into hollows ('female') of corresponding tubes fitted to other masts and beams, and *vice-versa*. These could extend both length-wise or at right-angles to the mast or beam. It is thus that modern iron scaffolding is often rigged up; and it would be interesting to see if there is any early evidence of the use of this device in timber construction in India. The principle was known in ancient Iran, where *kariz* clay pipes used to be fitted to each other this way, each being at one end 'male', and, at the other, 'female'.

#### TEXTILES

'Arif Qandahari is also our earliest source for Akbar's interest in textile technology. He says:

His Majesty has such an eye for the five points that he has introduced [lit. 'invented'] selken clothes, brocade, tapestry and carpets of silk and brocade in India, and instructed highly skilled masters in that art, so that the work in India is now much better than the work of Persia and Europe. He has so well practised the making of designs (*tarrahi*) that if Mani [the great artist] was alive, he would bite his fingers in astonishment at such design-making and dyeing.<sup>13</sup>

This passage is important in showing that Abu'l Fazl did not invent his attribution of Akbar's innovativeness in the realm of textile craft,

for this was widely recognised much before he began to write the *A'in-i Akbari*. Only he offers more details. First, under Akbar, he says,

painting and figures and weaves [lit. knots] and wonderful designs (*tarh'ha*) gained currency, and world-travellers, able to recognise quality products were wonderstruck. In a short while, the sagacious Emperor obtained familiarity with all theoretical and practical aspects of that art, and from his patronage, skilled masters of ready understanding belonging to this country also learnt it.<sup>14</sup>

It may be assumed that 'paintings' (*taswir*) and 'figures' (*naqsh*) in this passage referred to manual painting on cloth, the so-call 'painted chintz'; but embroidery could also have been intended, and even possibly tie-and-dye patterns. Elsewhere Abu'l Fazl speaks of Akbar's interest in 'gold-embroidery (*zar-dozī*), goldwire-and-silk weave (*kalabatun*), figure embroidery (*kashida*) flower[ed weave] (*qalgha*), tie-and-dye (*bandhnun*) chintz (*chhint*), striped cloth (*alacha*) and nappy [silk] cloth (*purzdar*).<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence, however, to show that Akbar introduced the draw-loom, known in Iran, to improve pattern-weave.

Special attention needs to be paid to the words *tarrahi* in 'Arif Qandahari, and *tarh* in the passage from Abu'l Fazl above quoted. It is very possible that these refer to the designs on the printing blocks for printed chintz. Ghani Beg Asadabadi, who left 'Abdu'r Rahim Khanan's service in 1592, is said to have 'endeavoured so much in the art of design-making (*tarrāh*) and inventing chintz-patterns (*ikhtira-i chit*), that those who were experts in that art admired and imitated him.'<sup>16</sup> This is said of him during his stay at Sironj, the centre of printed chintz. His contemporary Aqa Muhammad Shirazi 'made strange, wonderful inventions, and achieved much success in making designs for chintz (*tarrahi-i chit*), which they make best in Sironj in all of India'<sup>17</sup> If *tarh* and *tarrahi*, used in connexion with Akbar's achievements in textile work refer to designs on printing blocks. One would more readily understand why the designs or patterns he created should have had such a large admiring circle.

Printing-block designs would be connected closely with application of colours, and Akbar's expertise in both is indeed paired by Arif Qandahari. Abu'l Fazl tells us of Akbar's experiments with shawl-wool. Until now *tus*-wool had been used undyed, but Akbar set to dye it and found only that it would not take red colour. Further 'the white *alcha* also called *tarh'dar* has natural colours. Its wool is either white or black in colour. It is woven in three ways: (all) white, (all) black or mixed. The first (white) in old times could take no more than three or four colours. But His Majesty has made it many-hued (*gunagun*) [i.e. succeeded in applying many colours to it]'.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, then, there was much effort made by Akbar to see what dye the wool would take.

## 'AIRCONDITIONING' AND REFRIGERATION

In his description of India, Abu'l Fazl says that India used to be censured for 'the absence of cold water and the excess of heat.' Akbar sought to remove the cause of the latter complaint by popularising *khass*-frames:

There is a fragrant root, very cool, which is called *khass*. By His Majesty's command, it became common to make huts of bamboo frames (*nai-bast khana-ha*) stuffed with it. When water is thrown on it winter seems to arrive in the midst of summer.<sup>19</sup>

It is to be investigated if before Akbar the practice of cooling houses or rooms through the wetting of *khass*-frames was at all prevalent. It is not to be found in Babur's description of India. Bahar (1739) defines *khass-khana* as something peculiar to India and illustrates it with a fair range of verses, but all the three poets quoted appear to belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>20</sup>

Of still greater interest is Akbar's device to cool water. This was through the use of saltpetre. Abu'l Fazl quotes Akbar as having made the discovery<sup>21</sup> and himself more than once attributes the invention to him without any qualification.<sup>22</sup> The *locus classicus* for the invention is the following passage:

His Majesty, out of the surge of far-seeing wisdom, made saltpetre which creates such tumult as gun-powder, the means of cooling water, so that both the poor and rich were made happy thereby. It is a saltish-earth. They put it in a perforated pan and sprinkle some water on it. What drops [through the pan] is boiled, is separated from ordinary earth and crystallised (*barbandand*). A *ser* of water is poured into a bottle made of pewter or silver or such metal and its mouth is closed. In a pan two and a half *ser*s of saltpetre are mixed with five *ser*s of water, and the closed bottle is stirred within that mixture for the space of a half *ghari* [i.e. 12 minutes]. The water within the bottle gets very cold. For one rupee one can get three-quarters of a *man* to 4 *mans* (of saltpetre).<sup>23</sup>

Although Abu'l Fazl does not explicitly date the invention, he says, immediately after the above passage, that Akbar's shift of headquarters to Lahore in 1585 enabled him to get snow to cool his water. This suggests that the use of saltpetre for cooling water had been discovered when Akbar was at Fatehpur Sikri and Agra, well before 1585. No earlier description of the method exists, so that Abu'l Fazl's claims for his master as the inventor (or, at least, as the patron of the invention) seem justified. Subsequent descriptions, particularly of European travellers, are fairly numerous. These emphasise that it was a practice found only in India.<sup>24</sup>

Akbar's invention thus had a clear precedence in time over chemical devices for refrigeration in Europe, which moreover required snow for initiating the process.<sup>25</sup>

#### GEARED WATERLIFT

Babur had been greatly attracted by the device of gear-and-chain water-lift, to which Anglo-Indian usage later gave the name 'Persian wheel'. He had apparently never seen it in Central Asia and Afghanistan and had the first sight of it at Bhera, West Panjab, in 1519.<sup>26</sup> In his account of India he provides us with the earliest scientific description of the device.<sup>27</sup> It is not surprising that Akbar should have been interested in these wheels, and it is certainly shown very frequently by his artists in the book-illustrations that he commissioned.<sup>28</sup>

Abu'l Fazl attributes to Akbar certain inventions here as well:

His Majesty made such water-wheels (*daulab'ha*), and such (gear-) wheels (*gardunha*) that [I] water may be lifted from distant low-lying places. [II] Two oxen may also turn four wheels (*charkh*) simultaneously; and [III] also with one ox, turning two-wheels, water is brought up from two wells, and a water-mill is turned.<sup>29</sup>

Invention I is illustrated in two miniatures in the volume of Nizami's *Khamsa*, written and illustrated for Akbar's library.<sup>30</sup> Here while the ox remains on the ground, rotating a high vertical axle by going round and round with a drawbar, the axle carries at or near its top (in one illustration, it seems to be attached to another post for stability; in the other it stands clear) a pindrum, with whose pins mesh pegs of a vertical wheel. The latter wheel in turn rotates the chain-of-pots wheel, placed on the same axle, and thus water is lifted up to the level of the pin-drum.

It was this invention, which enabled water to be lifted to great heights at Fatehpur Sikri. As noted by Heber in 1826:

The whole hill on which the palace stands bears marks of terraces and gardens, to irrigate which an elaborate succession of wells, cisterns and wheels appears to have been contrived adjoining the great mosque and forcing up the water nearly to the height of its roof. The cisterns are still useful as receptacles of rain-water, but the machinery is long since gone to decay.<sup>31</sup>

The great wells, with successive stages of water-lift and the great network of viaducts are described in much detail by E.W. Smith in his survey of Fatehpur Sikri, but without any speculation as to the 'machinery' or the means by which the water could be lifted.<sup>32</sup> He could have seen it in the *khamsa-i-Nizami* illustrations. In any case,

the great water-works of Fatehpur Sikri make it certain that Invention I was in full use in the 1570s.

As for Inventions II and III one can see that these could be made possible only by making the gearing more efficient. There is no evidence, as we shall also note below in the next section, that Akbar and his engineers knew of any alternative to pin-drum gearing. Given this limitation, improvements could come by better carpentry (making the mesh of pegs with pins more close and exact), use of iron at places of contact, great structural stability for the apparatus, and so on. But unluckily, Abu'l Fazl does not inform us whether all or any of these were contemplated.

#### OTHER APPLICATIONS OF GEARING

In 1582 Mir Fathullah Shirazi, a renowned Iranian scholar, theologian and physician, came to Akbar's court, and immediately obtained high status among Akbar's main counsellors. Badauni reports that when the *nauroz* festival was celebrated on 20 March 1583, the Emperor arranged a bazar where:

as by previous custom, different shops were allotted to different nobles. In his own shop Shah Fathullah showed [products of] different kinds of skill, including load-moving machines (*jarr-i asqal*) and fanciful devices.<sup>33</sup>

More precise information is offered by Shaikh Nizamuddhin Ahmad who, writing in 1593, says of Fathullah:

He was also skilled in the sciences of fanciful devices (*'ulum-i ghariba*), such as strange and magical works. Thus he invented a mill placed on a cart, which moved of its own and made flour: he made a mirror in which were seen strange figures from far and near. By one wheel ten hand-guns had their heads fixed (*sar mi shud*).<sup>34</sup>

As M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman have pointed out, two of these inventions are classed among those attributed to Akbar by Abu'l Fazl.<sup>35</sup> From this Alvi and Rahman draw the rather extreme conclusion that not only these, but practically all the other mechanical inventions attributed to Akbar in the *A'in* were the work of Fathullah Shirazi, though the latter was at Akbar's Court for just seven years (1582-89).<sup>36</sup> Without entering into the debate as to how much should be ascribed to the Persian scholar, it is best to understand the nature of these machines from Abu'l Fazl's descriptions.

First, the cart-mill:

His Majesty, out of skill, invented a wonderful cart (*'araba*), which became the means of comfort for the people of the world. During the time it used for travel and transport, it mills various kinds of grain into flour.<sup>37</sup>



This is, of course the same as Fathullah Shirazi's invention. It obviously worked by putting on the single axle of the cart a pin-drum wheel, and just above it a horizontal peg-wheel to mesh with it. The millstone would then be placed on the axle of the letter wheel, and as the cart moved, the mill-stone would revolve. Since the pin-drum gearing (as in the contemporary Persian wheel) must have been of wood, there would be no need of any other type of gearing.<sup>38</sup>

Abu'l Fazl continues:

Further, His Majesty invented a large cart (*saturg gardune*), which an elephant pulls. It is so large that many chambers for hot bath are placed upon it; in it a hammam offers pleasure. Strange it is, that an ox can easily pull it. Also by camel and horse are these carts moved, and give comfort to people. The more delicate cart is called *bahl* and on even ground many people can sit and convey themselves on it.<sup>39</sup>

The description leaves one in doubt as to the precise nature of the mechanical improvement. It is distantly possible that gearing was involved in fanning the fire for heating water, through wheel-driven bellows on the trap-hammer principle. On the other hand, Akbar may have done nothing more than merely multiplying the number of wheels to give greater length to the elephant-drawn carriage. There is no evidence that Fathullah was involved in designing these carriages.

Finally the machine for cleaning guns, which appears to be the same (or on the same principle) as the machine said to have been invented by Fathullah Shirazi. Abu'l Fazl's description is as follows:

The *A'in* of making *Barghu*

Formerly even a man of strong arms used to suffer great hardship in working with iron instrument till some smoothness (*safa*) [within the hand-gun barrel] was achieved. His Majesty, out of wisdom, invented a wheel, which upon being turned by one ox, smoothened [the barrels of] sixteen handguns (*banduq*) in a small amount of time. For the reader's information, a diagram is provided.<sup>40</sup>

The original diagram is preserved in many MSS and is reproduced in Blochmann's translation.<sup>41</sup>

What the device did was not just 'cleaning' as rendered by Blochmann<sup>42</sup> while the term *safa* can be applied to both cleaning and polishing (or smoothening) the gun, it is otherwise with the word *barghu* or *yarghu* (as variously read in the MSS). This is not found in the dictionaries I have consulted, but its sense is made clear in the preceding chapter of the *A'in*:

When the Emperor has determined the weight of the pellet, and according to this, the size of the hole [of the barrel] takes shape. In a long [handgun] the weight [of the pellet] does not exceed 25 *tanks*,

and in the smaller [gun], 15 *tanks* with such weights only His Majesty has the boldness to fire. When the work of *barghu* is completed, the handgun is again sent to the Imperial apartments [for being-tested by Akbar], & c.<sup>43</sup>

It was the hard work of rubbing the inside of the barrel which was sought to be lightened by using animal power to rotate the 'iron-instrument' within the barrel.

Abu'l Fazl's diagram makes clear that the ox pulling round a draw-bar at a different level, rotated a large main wheel, which on its circumference meshed with a vertical gear-wheel. The symbol for pindrum-gearing (circle with triangular pegs on circumference) appears at each point the gearing took place. The iron-tool to smoothen the insides of the barrel was linked to the axle of the vertical wheel so that the gun, horizontally placed, would be pressed against the fixed rotating iron tool, penetrating its insides. The smith could manipulate the gun to get the barrel-hole smoothed to size.

#### HANDGUNS

Akbar's interest in handguns and artillery is emphasized in the *A'in-i Akbari*, and in a long passage he tells us how the gun was again and again submitted to him by the Imperial gunsmiths for testing and instructions in all stages of manufacture.<sup>44</sup>

Abu'l Fazl assigns to Akbar measures which led to the strengthening of the gun-barrel. He says under the *A'in* of the Handgun, (*Banduq*):

His Majesty has great attachment to the handgun. He is one of the unique ones in making and firing it. [Under his patronage] they so make the gun that, filled to the brim with gun-powder, and fired, it does not break up. Formerly, they could not fill more than one-fourth [of the barrel]. Moreover, they used to flatten iron with hammer and anvil, and joined both edges of the flattened piece [to make the barrel]. Others, out of foresight, used to leave [part of the flattened sheet] over one side. Much injury used to result [from explosion], especially in the former case. His Majesty introduced an excellent method. Having flattened the iron, they twist it crookedly like a paper-roll (*tumar*), so that with every twist, the roll gets longer. They do not join it edge to edge but pass one side over the other, and step by step strengthen it over the fire. Also, having fired and strengthened (*pukhta*) iron-sheets, they draw them around an [iron] rod, and so a [barrel] hole is produced. Three or four pieces are used to make [a single gun barrel]; in the case of small guns, two pieces. The long [barrel] is two *gaz* long, the small, one and a quarter *gaz*; it is called *damanak*. Its stock is made differently.<sup>45</sup>

Akbar's arsenal thus claims to have introduced a new method of making the gun barrel, by (a) twisting a flat iron sheet, continuously

fired, to fold round and round in an elongated fashion with its edges overlapping one another, and then (b) joining such twisted fired pieces over an iron rod to create a barrel. There would then be no weak joints in the barrel. Short of iron-casting, this would appear to produce the most strength in the barrel and make it withstand high explosive pressure.

The passage we have discussed is followed by one which seems to be of a great technological importance:

Further, from the expertness of His Majesty they have so made [handguns] that without the fire-match (*fatila-i atish*), with a little movement of the cock (*masha*), explosion occurs and the pellet is expelled.<sup>46</sup>

In the subsequent description of the stages of gun manufacture we are told that once the barrel and stock were fitted, and then the *tah* (hind-part or priming pan?) brought in, 'they become responsible for setting right the cock, and the *gaz* (ramrod?) and *pargaz*(?)'<sup>47</sup> It is not clarified how the cock worked, and therefore we do not learn how without the match, it could have ignited the powder in the priming-pan.

I had initially suggested that a wheel-lock must have been employed, and then thought that a matchlock was meant after all, though match-lock would still need to have a *fatila* or match.<sup>48</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan is right to upbraid such inconsistency, and his very definitive study of the early history of handguns in India has narrowed the choice to wheel-lock fairly closely;<sup>49</sup> but positive proof is yet to come.

#### FANCIFUL DEVICES

Much of Arabic-Persian theoretical technology consisted of imagining diverse motions derived from water-flow, gearing, and levers and balances. Al-Jazari is the best illustration of this tradition. Making such devices in practice was a little more difficult, but we know that some, like water-clocks, were actually made.

Nuru'l Haqq in his *Zubdatu'l Tawarikh* describes a 'magic machine' which Akbar saw in 1594-95 and greatly enjoyed. Elliot selected and translated this passage, and I reproduce part of his translation with some modifications based on comparison with text.

One of the wonders of art which was exhibited during this year (AH 1003) was the work of Saiyid Husain Shirazi. He used to stand with a box in front of him, and when anyone gave him a rupee, he threw it into the box and it kept on rolling until it fell to the bottom. Upon this a parrot, which was placed above that box (*buq'a*), began to chirp at one another. Then a small window opened, and a panther put forward its head out of it, and a shell came out of its mouth to

fall on a dish which was placed on the head of a tiger, and the shell came out of the tiger's mouth. . . . [similar other motions and actions by toy animals and puppets follow; ultimately,] another window opened, and a puppet came forth with an ode from the *Diwan* of Hafiz in its hands, and when the ode was taken away, it retired, and the window closed. In short, whenever money was placed in his [Husain Shirazi's] hands, all these curious things took place. His Majesty first threw an *ashrafi* (gold coin) with his own hand and witnessed the sight. He then ordered those present to throw a rupee each. The odes they received, they gave to Naqib Khan, by whom they were read out. This entertainment continued for much of the night.<sup>50</sup>

One can see that while the initial momentum came from the dropping of the coin, the further action derived from the displacement of successively heavier weights. The entire apparatus needed only levers, balances and, perhaps, pulleys, to work as it did. No gears or springs were necessarily involved, and so no influence from European clockwork or mechanical devices can be predicted. It is, however, good to know that Akbar could enjoy a well-constructed magical device like any one of us would.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Letters from the Mughal Court: the first Jesuit Mission to Akbar (1580-83)*, ed. [ & tr.], with an Introduction by John Correia-Afonso, Bombay/Anand, 1980, p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
4. Monserrate, *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, tr. J.S. Holyland and S.N. Banerjee, Cuttack, 1922, p. 201. See also Fierre du Jarric's account based (ultimately) on Jesuit letters in *Akbar and the Jesuits*, tr. C.H. Payne, London, 1926, p. 206 ('the next moment he would be seen shearing camels, hewing stones, cutting wood, or hammering iron').
5. Arif Qandahari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, ed. Muinuddin Nadvi, Azhar Ali Dihlawi and Imtiyaz Ali Arshi, Rampur, 1962, p. 43.
6. *The A'in-i Akbari*, I, tr. H. Blochmann, Rev. D.C. Phillott, Calcutta, 1927, p. 49.
7. See the separate description of *bargah* under *A'in-i Farrash Khana* in *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, Calcutta, 1866-67, I, p. 49. This shows that it was a hall made by tented roof, so that '10,000 people or more could find shade under it'. The significance of *sargha* as main mast appears from this passage and other occurrences of the word in the same *A'in*.
8. *Ibid.*, I, p. 41.
9. In this sentence Blochmann's ed. erroneously reads *magar do* instead of the correct word *nagardad*, found in the Nawal Kishor ed., 1893, I, p. 32. Contrary to my earlier denigration of it, I find the latter edition based on some MSS not available to Blochmann and to give often enough superior readings.
10. *Ain-i Akbari*, I, p. 49.
11. *Ain-i Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, I, p. 56, lines 11 and 17.

12. R.W. Symonds in Singer, et al. (ed.), *History of Technology*, II, p. 242n. The terms 'male and female' (*nar ma dagi*) are indeed, applied to the bolt of a block in *Bahar-i 'Ajam*, of Tek Chand, 1739, S.V. *narmadagi*.
13. *Tarikh-i Akbari*, p. 45.
14. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, p. 101.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4.
16. 'Abdul' Baqi Nihawandi, *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, ed. M. Hidayet Hosain, Calcutta, 1919-31, III, pp. 980, 986
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1659.
18. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, pp. 103-4. The sense is lost in Blochmann's rendering: 'His Majesty had given the order to dye it in various ways' (tr., I, p. 97), as if it was a mere question of fashion. The verb is *barsakht*, made, not 'ordered'.
19. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, II, p. 6
20. *Bahar-i 'Ajam*, s.v. *Khaskhana*: 'Hut made of *khas* in which people sit in summer, and this fragrant *khas* [or grass] and such hut are peculiar to India'. The poets quoted are: Qubul, Hakim Sadiq, and Mulla Abu'l Barkat Munir.
21. In the collection of 'Heart-ravishing Sayings of His Majesty' at the end of the *A'in-i Akbari*, II, p. 241: 'When we experimented with saltpetre, it turned out that attachment to salt [i.e. loyalty] is also to be found in water.'
22. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 51; II, p. 6.
23. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 51. Blochmann's translation of this passage (tr., I, p. 58) is accurate. One *man* of Akbar's time was equal to 55-32 lb. avdp.
24. The earliest I have noted is Peter Mundy (1632) (*The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia*, II, ed. R.C. Temple, London, 1914, p. 77). See also Francois Bernier, (1664), *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656-58*, tr. A. Constable, Rev. V.A. Smith, London, 1916, pp. 356-7, and John Marshall (1671). *John Marshall in India—Notes and Observations in Bengal, 1668-72*, ed. S.A. Khan. London, 1927, pp. 428-9).
25. For these see R.J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, VI, Leiden, 1966, p. 105. I had drawn attention to this precedence in 'Changes in Technology in Medieval India', *Studies in History*, New Delhi, II (i) (1980), p. 38.
26. *Baburnama*, Abdur's Rahim's Persian transl., Br. Mus. or. 3174, f. 314b; tr. A.S. Beveridge, London, 1921, I, p. 388..
27. *Ibid.*, Or. 3174, ff. 376b-377a; tr. A.S. Beveridge, II, pp. 486-7.
28. Cf. S.P. Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 109: the arrow indicating direction in diagram in Plate XLVII (Nos. 14 and 15) needs to be revised.
29. *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, p. 199.
30. Br. Mus. Or. 12208, ff. 65a. 99b.
31. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, &c.*, II, London, 1873, p. 15.
32. Edmund W. Smith. *Moghul Architecture at Fatehpur Sikri*, Allahabad, 1896, Part II, pp. 19, 32-31, 38-40.
33. Badauni, *Muntakhabu't Tawarikh*, ed. Ali, Ahmad and Lees, Calcutta, 1864-69, II, p. 321.
34. *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, ed. B. De, Calcutta, 1913-35, II, p. 457. The phrase *sar mi shud*, should ordinarily be taken to mean 'fired', and this leads Alvi and Rahman, pp. 30-31 to conjecture that a 'wheel-lock' is here involved. A single wheel-lock could not fire 10 guns at a time. Leaving this aside, if the guns were fired when placed around a big wheel, they would all point in different directions, which would be of no use.
35. *Ain-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, I, pp. 126, 199.
36. M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman, *Fathullah Shirazi, a Sixteenth Century Indian Scientist*, New Delhi, 1968, esp. pp. 4, 30-32.

37. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 199.
38. By and large the modern drawing Fig. III in Alvi and Rahman, op. cit., p. 8, correctly represents the device, except that the wheel on the cart-axle should be a pin-drum to give greater stability and smoothness of motion to the gearing.
39. *A'in-i Akbari*, I, p. 199.
40. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann. I, p. 126.
41. Upper diagram in Plate XV, facing p. 18. The lower drawing is a modern one and fairly misleading.
42. *Ain-i Akbari*, tr. Blochmann, I, p. 122.
43. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed., I, p. 125.
44. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed., p. 125.
45. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. I, p. 125.
46. *A'in-i Akbari*, ed., I, p. 125.
47. Ibid., p. 126. Jagangir, *Tuzuk*, ed. Syud Ahmud, p. 199, uses the word *atish-khana*, fire-chamber, for the priming pan.
48. *IESHR*, XVII (1), p. 17, & *Studies in History*, II (1), p. 36.
49. 'The nature of handguns in Mughal India', paper presented at Medieval Section, Indian History Congress, New Delhi, (unpublished).
50. H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, London, 1867-77, VI, p. 192. I have checked with India Office MS. Ethé 290. f. 189a-b.

IQTIDAR ALAM KHAN\*

## *Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook: A Critical Reappraisal*

### I

Akbar's contribution to the establishment of Mughal authority in Hindustan on a firm basis has engaged the attention of the modern historians for a long time. Some of the recent researches on Akbar, however, have tended to focus on a particular theme, namely, the factors contributing to the rise of his policy of religious tolerance based on the principle of *sulh-i kul*, or 'Absolute Peace'. Akbar's 'religious policy' is often viewed in these studies as being linked to his transformation of the nobility into a composite ruling group including within its ranks a fairly large number of Shi'as and Rajput chieftains.

An important factor to study in evaluating these interpretations is the nature of Akbar's personal world outlook and of the ideological influences that went to shape his religious policy in the last twentyfive years of his reign. Athar Ali has recently re-examined this aspect in his article 'Akbar and Islam'.<sup>1</sup> His article has given rise to several significant questions having a bearing on the basic character and motivations of Akbar's 'religious policy'. Perhaps two of the most relevant of these questions are: (a) To what extent did Akbar's personal world outlook influence his religious policy? and (b) What was the response of the different sections of his subjects to his religious views and more importantly to the state policy formulated by him. These questions assume special significance in view of the contemporary testimony of Badauni and the *Jesuits* suggesting that, from 1581 onwards, Akbar had ceased to be a Muslim. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's insistence that Akbar's tolerant attitude towards the non-Muslims stemmed basically from his hostility to Islam, further underlines the significance of the above two questions for a proper assessment of Akbar's policy of religious tolerance.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper an attempt is made to briefly trace the development of Akbar's world view from his accession in 1556 to 1605. While doing so, I shall also be focussing on the two questions identified above. To the extent it is permitted by the new evidence that I plan to present in this

---

\* Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University.

paper, I shall also be suggesting a reconsideration of some of the positions taken by Athar Ali in his paper on the character of Akbar's religious policy towards the end of his reign.

The ensuing argument in this paper is presented by me in the following two parts. In the next section I have offered brief comments on some of Akbar's personality traits and his early religious beliefs and attitudes. The final two other sections would be mainly devoted to examining Akbar's world outlook in the post-1581 phase.

## II

The textbook explanations for Akbar's natural inclination towards religious tolerance in terms of his being influenced by the broad mindedness of his parents and teachers of Sunni as well as Shi'a persuasions who had no use for sectarian bigotry, appeal to common sense. But in this regard it may be pointed out that the supposition of some of the textbook writers that Akbar's mother, Hamida Bano Begam, was a Shi'a<sup>3</sup> has no basis. On the contrary, her brother, Muazzam Beg, becoming involved in 1546, in the assassination of Humayun's then *wazir*, Khwaja Sultan Rushdi, an Iranian and Shi'a, by the Sunni bigots, goes to suggest that he and possibly by the other members of the family as well, including Hamida Bano Begam, were Sunnis.<sup>4</sup> It cannot, however, be denied that Akbar's tutors including Irani Shia's like Bairam Khan and Mir Abdul Latif Qazvini as well as a Sunni Turanis like, Mun'im Khan, were largely above sectarian prejudices. About Mir Abdul Latif Qazvini, it is asserted by Abul Fazl that for his rejection of sectarian prejudices he was condemned by the bigots of both the sects.<sup>5</sup> So far as Bairam Khan was concerned, notwithstanding what some of the eighteenth century Persian chroniclers like Khafi Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan suggest about his sectarian partiality (*i'assub*), contemporary evidence present him without fail as a person who, seemingly, did not attach much significance to the Shi'a-Sunni divide.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, it is known about Mun'im Khan, a Sunni, that he counted among his closest friends Ali Quli Khan who was well known for his Shi'a beliefs.<sup>7</sup> It is, therefore, reasonable to imagine that the contribution of these teachers of Akbar to his natural inclination towards religious tolerance was not inconsiderable.

In a discussion of the influences contributing to making Akbar's mind receptive to ideas promoting religious tolerance one must also take into consideration the cultural ethos of the Timurid polity down to Humayun's time. Timur is reported to have respected all the religions alike. This climate of religious tolerance appears to have by and large persisted in the Timurid polity down to the time Akbar came to the throne.<sup>8</sup> The Timurid cultural ethos not favouring religious bigotry, perhaps, had something to do with the considerable influence that the



*Yasa-i Chingezi* continued to exercise on the minds of the successive Timurid rulers (with the doubtful exception of Abu Sa'id Mirza) down to Akbar's time. According to 'Alauddin 'Ata Juwaini, the *Yasa-i Chingezi* required the ruler 'to consider all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another'. It was in pursuance of this principle that Chingiz Khan, in Juwaini's words 'eschewed bigotry and preference of one faith to another placing some above others'.<sup>9</sup> The climate of religious tolerance promoted within the Timurid polity by the influence of *Yasa-i Chingezi* is for example also highlighted by the persecution of Shia's not being in evidence on any noticeable scale in the Timurid principalities. This demarcated them so conspicuously from the post-Abbasid Turkish Sultanates—Delhi Sultanate being one—where the persecution of the so-called heretics was always so prominent.

The increasing presence of Shi'a Iranis in the nobility after Humayun's return from Iran (1545)<sup>10</sup> without giving rise to Shia-Sunni tensions in any appreciable measure is an eloquent testimony of the Mughal empire in Hindustan being, from the beginning, a very different type of state from Sultanates it replaced in different parts of the Indian sub-continent. It is worth noting in this context that before the induction of a large number of Irani Shi'as in Humayun's service, in no other state ruled by a Muslim dynasty did the Shi'as and Sunnis co-exist in the nobility in such remarkable amity. The Safavid empire, where the rulers, claiming to be the *imams* of the Islamic community world over, severely repressed elements suspected of Sunni leanings was no exception to this rule. Thus it might be safely suggested that the influence of the *Yasa-i Chingezi* to the extent it survived in the Timurid polity till the middle of the sixteenth century, was an important element in Akbar's cultural heritage inducing him to be less intolerant towards religious beliefs not shared by him. Akbar's adopting an intolerant attitude towards the Shi'as and Mahdavis during the sixties may, however be explained with reference to, besides other factors, the gradual erosion of the influence of the Mongol tradition in the Mughal empire.

For a proper appreciation of the way Akbar's world outlook gradually evolved and of his becoming, from around 1581 onward, strongly committed to the principles of *sulh-i kul*, it is also important to keep in view some of the traits of his personality recorded by contemporary observers.

According to Monserrate, Akbar had 'a somewhat morose disposition' to which he attributes the latter's excessive interest in 'various games'.<sup>11</sup> That Akbar's extraordinary interest, during his early years, in hunt and elephant fights verged upon obsession is borne out even by Abul Fazl's account. Abul Fazl, it seems, finds it embarrassing to report Akbar's senselessly endangering his life repeatedly in hunt or while witnessing elephant fights or tackling

*mast* elephants. He has devoted a whole chapter in the *Akbarnama* to dilating on Akbar's 'inclination for elephants'. At another place noticing Akbar's recklessly endangering his life by mounting a *mast* elephant in 1561. Abul Fazl has quoted a not very bright saying of Akbar from this period, suggesting that he thus endangered his life deliberately. Akbar goes on to say that if he had displeased God in any manner, 'may that elephant finish us for we cannot support the burden of life under God's displeasure.'<sup>12</sup> This statement of young Akbar, incidentally, also point to his being during this time, vaguely dissatisfied and apologetic about his own conduct in the society as well as in religious matters.

This psychological imbalance in Akbar's personality also appears to have manifested itself in the occasional fits of depression and melancholy that he is reported to have suffered down to 1578. The last fit of this nature is reported from 1578; it came in the midst of a hunting expedition. On this occasion Akbar became unconscious for some time. It appeared, according to Abul Fazl, as if he was dying.<sup>13</sup> That these fits which are characterised by Abul Fazl and also by Akbar himself, as spiritual experiences, recurred down to 1578 and are not reported from the subsequent period when Akbar had developed a new world view identified with *sulh-i kul* goes to suggest that these had something to do with the mental tensions of that phase of his life when he was often confused and uncertain about his beliefs and intellectual commitments.

The dichotomies of Akbar's religious beliefs and intellectual commitments during the seventies are illustrated by the perplexing questions that he is reported to have posed to the Muslim religious divines during the first phase of discussions in the '*Ibadat Khana*' (1575-78). These uncertainties and dichotomies were partly also fed by Akbar's general inquisitiveness and questioning temperament as well by his eagerness to always conform to an accepted code of ethical and legal behaviour, a trait of personality that he seems to have inherited from his father. Two scientific experiments made by Akbar in the seventies go to illustrate his questioning temperament in general. Arif Qandahari mentions his not very successful attempt at cross-breeding a male deer mate with a *barbari* goat. This experiment produced hybrid deer lacking the capacity to breed.<sup>14</sup> The other experiment involving six newly born infants, was aimed at testing the theory of *zuban-i qudrat*, or natural language, a notion having its origin, possibly, in the speculative philosophy of classical Greece. The notion of *zuban-i qudrat* certainly had no validity in the Islamic theological tradition.

During the same period Akbar seems to have been exposed for the first time to philosophical discourses (*sukhnan-i hikmat*) so strongly disapproved by the post-Ghazali Islamic theology. Among the persons who introduced him to an Islamised version of Greek philosophy in

early seventies, Shaikh Mubarak and his sons, Fazi and Abul Fazl, were the most prominent. Akbar in one of his sayings admits to finding these discourses so exceedingly enchanting (*dilawez: dilruba*) that it was difficult for him to keep away from them.<sup>15</sup> It was in this background of Akbar's growing interest in philosophy and his raising questions about religion in general in a spirit of introspection that the process of re-examining the important aspects of Islamic theology and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) began in the *'Ibadat Khana* around 1578. The ball was set rolling, according to Badauni, by Shaikh Mubarak when he raised a question regarding the position of *Imam-i Adil vis-a-vis Mujtahid*. It was this discussion which led to the signing of a *Mahzar* (1579) by the leading theologians recognizing Akbar as *Badshah-i Islam*.

One knows from unimpeachable evidence, including some of Akbar's own sayings recorded after 1581 that in his early years he was not only a practising Muslim but also had a very intolerant attitude towards Hindus. He regretfully admits of having forced many Hindus, during those early years, to be converted to Islam.<sup>16</sup> Akbar was then looked upon by Muslim orthodox elements as a pious Muslim committed to defending Islam against infidelity. Rizquallah Mushtaqi, a well known Shaikhzada of Delhi, writing around 1580, says that Akbar was sent by God to protect Islam from being suppressed by Hemu.<sup>17</sup> In one of his passing remarks Badauni suggests that during this period (early years of his reigns) Akbar was under the influence of *Nagshbandiya* order.<sup>18</sup>

It, however, seems that his attitude towards Hindu religious rites and forms of worship was no longer contemptuous and hostile after he married (beginning with 1562), the daughters and nieces of a number of Rajput chieftains. Badauni says that during Akbar's early youth (*unfuwan-e Shabab*) he used to perform *nom*, a form of fire worship in the company of his Hindu wives.<sup>19</sup> It gives the impression that as far back as early sixties, Akbar was perceived by many of his contemporaries, as being not averse to performing Hindu rites, his Islamic piety of this phase notwithstanding. This impression is reinforced by measures like the announcement of the abolition of Pilgrimage Tax (1563) and *Jizia* (1564) or the establishment of an *in'am* grant for the support of a temple at Vindravan (1565).

However, during the same period when Akbar was showing increasing respect for Hindu beliefs and practices (i.e. during the sixties), he had a manifestly suppressive attitude towards the sects condemned by the orthodox Muslims as heretics. The Iranian nobles, mostly Shi'as were encouraged and used against the discontented Turanis throughout the sixties.<sup>20</sup> But at the same time their freedom to profess and practise their faith was sought to be restricted. A glaring example of such a restrictive attitude towards Shi'as was the exhumation, in 1567, of Mir Murtaza Sharifi Shirazi's remains from the vicinity (*Jawar*) of Amir Khusrau's tomb in Delhi at the suggestion

of Shaikh Abdu'n Nabi. The argument put forward in justification of the exhumation was that a 'heretic' could not be allowed to remain buried so close to the grave of a renowned Sunni saint. It was no doubt an extreme expression of sectarian hatred. Even Badauni had criticised the exhumation of Mir Murtaza Sharifi Shirazi's remains as a very unjust act.<sup>21</sup> Akbar's *farman* to Abdus Samad, the *Muhtasib* of *pargana* Bilgram, directing him, around 1572, to 'help in eradicating the heresy and deviation from the *pargana*' is an indication that the restrictive attitude towards Shi'aism continued to persist till as late as early seventies.<sup>22</sup>

Akbar's hostility towards the Mahadavis was still more pronounced. His attitude towards them continued to be repressive down to 1573 when he is reported to have suppressed them harshly in Gujarat. It was in the course of this suppression that the leading Mahadavi divine, Miyan Mustafa Bandgi, was arrested and brought to the court in chains.<sup>23</sup>

Akbar's coming increasingly under the influence of pantheistic *sufi* doctrines, roughly from 1571 onwards, was a momentous turn in the development of his world view. It paved the way for his eventual rejection of what he regarded as Islam professed by the traditional divines (*faqihan-i taqlidi*) in favour of a new and entirely different concept of Islam which transcended the limits demarcating the different religions (*Kesh'ha*) and the essence of which, according to Akbar, was not in reciting the article of faith or getting circumcised, but in one's readiness and capacity to fight against overpowering existential desires or urges [*nafs-i amarat*]. Akbar was exposed to these ideas way back in the sixties when he first came into contact with the Chishti *khanqahs* at Ajmer and Sikri. Still earlier his contacts with the Shaikh Ghaus Gwaliori could also have provided him with an opportunity to become familiar with pantheistic doctrines of *fana* and *wahdat u'l-wujud*. Already by 1573, Akbar had come to regard Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti as his spiritual preceptor. In one of his conversations with Miyan Mustafa Bandgi, Akbar is reported to have declared: 'Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti is my preceptor. . . Any one who says that he was misguided (*gumrah*) is an infidèle. I shall kill the person saying this with my own hands.'<sup>24</sup> This is confirmed by Badauni's testimony to the effect that already in 1577 Akbar was regularly practising the spiritual exercises prescribed in the Chishti *silsilah*. Some time after 1575, he even tried to learn the art of performing *Chilla-i makus* [concentrating on God while suspended head down in a well for forty days and nights] from Shaikh Chaya Laddha.<sup>25</sup>

The influence of pantheistic sufic doctrine of *fana* seems to have provided impetus to Akbar's interest in philosophy. In the company of Shaikh Mubarek, Abul Fazl, Ghazi Khan Badekhshi, Hakim Abul Fath and other rationalist thinkers, during 1578-82, he eventually

became familiar with the systematic exposition of the doctrine of *wahdat ul-wujud* by Ibn al-'Arabi in a larger philosophical perspective. As Irfan Habib points out, the pantheism of Ibn al-'Arabi despite its lacking a rational basis, was capable of becoming a strong ideological challenge to the post-Ghazali conventionalism in the mainstream Islamic tendency. It was this quality of the impact of Ibn al-'Arabi's ideas on Akbar's world view and more importantly on his socio-political perceptions during 1578-82, that is characterised by Abul Fazl as the elevation of 'intellect (*Khirad*)' to a 'high pedestal (*buland paigi*)'. The idea suggested by Ibn al-'Arabi that all which is not a part of divine reality is an illusion, in turn, led Akbar to the notion that all religions are either equally true or equally illusionary,<sup>26</sup> a suggestion that was bound to be sharply denounced by all the shades of orthodox opinion as an unspeakable heresy and deviation from the true path. What is, however, more significant is that it was equally unacceptable to Jesuit fathers then present at the Court. Monserrate has specifically criticised the practical implications of this idea. Commenting on Akbar's assurance in 1581 to Jalala Roshani of freedom to practise his cult considered heretical by the orthodox Muslims. Monserrate observes: 'the King cared little that in allowing everyone to follow his religion he was in reality violating all'.<sup>27</sup> The emergence of this new ideological trend at the court seems to have confused many of the quite learned people regarding Akbar's world view. Abdul Qadir Badauni for instance viewed the intellectual climate at the court around 1581 as the triumph of Shiaism over orthodoxy.<sup>28</sup> This was, in-any-case, another decisive in Akbar's world point of departure world view taking him much farther away from the accepted Islamic beliefs and practices than was ever possible within the parameters of the pantheistic notions of Islamic mysticism.

### III

The development of Akbar's world view subsequent to his being deeply influenced by the pantheistic philosophy of Ibn al-'Arabi is identified with the concept of *sulh-i kul* (absolute peace). This concept was formulated by him and for him by Abul Fazl in such a manner that it was elevated from the status of a mystic notion alluding to the state of *fana* to that of a concept denoting the principles capable of promoting socio-political amity in a culturally pluralistic situation. In a revealing restatement of Alberuni's famous passage criticizing Brahmans for their intellectual insularity, Abul Fazl has tried to project the idea that social strife was caused in India primarily by the absence of the spirit of *sulh-i kul*. He goes on to suggest in the same passage that the absence of the spirit of *sulh-i kul* in the Indian society was caused mainly by the preponderance of an attitude of

imitation (*taqlid*) and by the suppression of intellect and reason [*warzidan-i tund bad-i taqlid and afsurdan-i chiragh-i khirad*].<sup>29</sup>

From 1581 onwards, Akbar's world view identified with *sulh-i kul* tended to deviate sharply from the mainstream tendency of orthodox Islam in so far as there was no place in it for the prescribed prayers and also because it betrayed an attitude of near ambiguity on the question of prophethood. It was much closer to the teachings of the contemporary Nirguna Bhakti sects which criticised both Hinduism and Islam for being formalistic and socially divisive. The conceptualization of man's relations with God articulated by Akbar in one of his not very well known statements reveals its proximity in certain important respects to the one found in the teachings of Nirguna Bhakti teachers. Replying to a query from Murad in 1595, Akbar tells him: 'Devoting of the Matchless One (*bechun*) is beyond the limits of the spoken word whether in respect of form (*jism*), material attributes [*jismaniat*], letter (*harf*) or sound (*saut*). Devotion to the Matchless One is (also) matchless. If God so wishes, (you) shall enter, into the private chamber of this wonderful divine mystery. At present auspicious preamble (to the discourse on the subject) is this that he (Murad) may decorate with agreeable sincerity and praiseworthy actions the page of his disposition (*safha-i khatir*) and endeavour for gaining our pleasure so that with its blessing this other fortunate house of devotion (to God) may be opened (to him)'.<sup>30</sup> Emphasis on the absoluteness of Divine Reality and a subtle suggestion in this passage, that one could reach it, not through formal prayers, but only by cultivating the self and with the help a preceptor, recalls to mind the teaching of Kabir and Nanak.

It is again very much like the contemporary Bhakti cults that in Akbar's system there was strong emphasis on the role of a preceptor. As he tells Murad in the above passage that the latter could hope to 'enter into the private chamber of this wonderful divine mystery (of devotion to the Matchless One)' only with the help and guidance of Akbar who was in a position of his preceptor. The status of preceptor in Akbar's system is, however, perceived as *insan-i kamil* of the Islamic mysticism.

This new world view reflected itself, with its distinct tilt towards rationality as well as with all of its inconsistencies, in the norms of moral behaviour that Akbar prescribed not only for his personal devotees (*arbab-i iradat*) included in the charmed circle of *Tauhid-i Ilahi* but were often also addressed to ordinary members of the socio-political elite. It is also revealed more majestically in Abul Fazl's theoretical's expositions on the concept of kingship. He defines kingship variously, as *farr-i izadi* and as originating in a social contract between men in society and those in authority.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these are Akbar's sayings<sup>32</sup> and other documents reproduced by Abul Fazl projecting a new set of elitist cultural values rooted in common

sense experience but not violating the spirit of *sulh-i kul*. Some of these values appear astonishingly 'modern' as well as imbued with compassion.

This is for example suggested by Akbar's numerous observations recorded by Abul Fazl reflecting on the duty of the ruler to work for the welfare of the common people or highlighted by the statements revealing Akbar's deep respect and concern for women of aristocratic as well as lower classes, illustrate this point I should like to reproduce his reply to Murad's request from Burhanpur (1595) for the transfer of a *dak-chauki* man, Bahadur, to his camp. Akbar is reported to have recorded the order: 'Bahadur's wife is not agreeable to his going (there). If presently we (are able to) persuade her, we shall send Bahadur as well. Otherwise after a few days we shall depute him to carry a *farman* by *dak-chauki*. Then you may detain him (there).'<sup>33</sup>

In this statement of Akbar references to Bahadur's wife not agreeing to a particular duty suggested by the King himself for her husband and to his vague hope that he might eventually succeed in persuading her to change her mind are quite revealing. These imply an attitude of respecting a woman's say in a decision that might separate her from her husband for a long time. Similarly one of his sayings where he ridicules Hindu males for seeking salvation in the other world by inducing their wives to perish in fire and the one in which he criticises Muslim personal law for 'daughters' receiving 'a smaller share in the inheritance, although it is better that weaker should receive large share',<sup>34</sup> point to a thought process refreshingly original and compassionate in its orientation.

Similarly, Akbar's strong disapproval of flesh eating were also rooted not in his religious beliefs but basically reflective of his natural compassion for living beings (*jandaran*). He shames the flesh eaters for having converted 'their bosoms (*sina*), where reside the mysteries of Divinity, into a burial ground of animals (*guristan-i haiwanat*)'. In a similar context he exclaims: 'I wish my body made of elements (*jism-i 'unsari*) was big like that of an elephant so that these flesh eating ignorant ones would have satisfied their hunger (*sair gashta*) with my flesh sparing other living beings'.<sup>35</sup> A deep compassion for animals reflected by these sayings speaks for itself. What is important about this sentiment is that it is not sought to be supported by any religious sanction or appeal. This is one of those cultural norms recommended by Akbar that seem to carry the imprint of his very private reflections not fully assimilated in the structure of beliefs and ideas that he was trying to evolve. These were his reflections not as the *Insan-i Kamil* or *Pir-o-Murshid* of the official discourse but as a very sensitive and intelligent private man who had missed the opportunity to receive formal education.

Akbar's socio-religious outlook identified with *sulh-i kul* developed, and created ideological space for itself, largely through a

polemical dialogue with the main stream Islamic orthodoxy within the framework of comparative religion. At an ideological plane the tendency identified with *sulh-i kul* was critical of the Hindu beliefs and practices as well but this aspect remained all the time in the background, possibly because, none of the Hindu sects thus criticised responded to the challenge.<sup>36</sup> The reaction of the orthodox Muslim theologians was generally sharp. In some cases it tended to be most uncompromising. It was this continuing polemics between a large section of the orthodox theologians and the protagonists of *sulh-i kul* which continued for about twentyfive years (roughly the second half of Akbar's reign) appears to have given rise to a widely held belief during a short phase towards the end of Akbar's reign that he was very hostile to Islam and was trying to undermine its position within the Mughal empire. Badauni and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi seem to represent the more extreme reactions of this genre.

In this context it should, however, be kept in mind that the exaggerated reaction of Badaunis and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi were not fully shared by many, perhaps a majority of the contemporary orthodox *ulama*. A large number of such persons noticed by Badauni himself in the third volume of *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh* as men of great piety and learning are also mentioned as maintaining close contacts with Akbar's court during the time when the polemics of the supporters of *sulh-i kul* against orthodox Islam were at its height. This is also suggested by some of the occasional statements of the most eminent theologian of the time, Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis, and his son, Shaikh Nurul Haq. Although both of them were critical of some of the new ideas promoted by Akbar yet seemingly, they did not share the alarmist view of Akbar's policies taken by Abdul Qadir Badauni. As late as in 1605, Shaikh Abdul Haq, could find it possible to conclude his book, *Tarikh-i Haq-i*, with a prayer where Akbar is referred to as the reigning *Padshah*, who was expected to act as the defender of Islam. In the same year, Shaikh Nurul Haq went out of his way in remarking that Akbar's motives in encouraging religious discussions were misunderstood by the common people.<sup>37</sup> These passages obviously imply an assessment of Akbar's role as king and of his motives in starting religious discussions, qualitatively different from those of Badauni and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

#### IV

I should like to conclude this paper with a few comments on the doubt raised by Athar Ali regarding Niamatullah's<sup>38</sup> and Muhammad Sadiq's<sup>39</sup> testimony corroborating Badauni's and Shaikh Sirhindi's allegations that, towards the end of his reign, Akbar had adopted a repressive attitude towards the practitioners of orthodox Islam



discouraging *namaz* in congregation and closing down mosques and *khanqahs*.

Athar Ali raises a doubt about the veracity of these statements by pointing out that an exceptionally large mosque was built by Man Singh at Raj Mahal in 1592. Regarding this mosque he also quotes the popular tradition recorded in the Archaeological Survey's report that the structure 'was originally intended for a temple, but was afterwards turned into the Jama Masjid for fear of the Emperor'. He seems to argue that the report pertaining to the closing down of mosques could have been an exaggeration of the difficulties caused by the reduction in 'the flow of financial patronage' to Islamic institutions. He thinks that 'given Akbar's own religious views', 'a persecution' of the practitioners of orthodox Islam does not appear plausible.

There is now available some more quite firm evidence supporting Badauni's and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's version in its essentials. This evidence needs to be taken into account before one makes up his mind on the position taken by Athar Ali.

Before I come to an examination of this additional evidence, I consider it imperative to point out that the building of a mosque by Man Singh at Raj Mahal in 1592 is not very relevant to the present discussion. One might suggest that the restrictive attitude with regard to Islamic practices and institutions mentioned by Badauni and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi might have appeared at a slightly later date than 1592, may be around 1600. There is in fact some basis for such a suggestion. Badauni's and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's testimony on Akbar's alleged suppression of Islam is partly corroborated only for 1601 by an independent and unimpeachable source.

The attempt at closing down the mosques and prohibiting *namaz* in congregation is supported by the contents of a '*farman*' addressed by Salim, during his rebellion of 1601, to local *hakims*. Its text is reproduced by Rafiuddin Ibrahim Shirazi in his book, *Tazkirat ul-Muluk*. As I have argued elsewhere, although Rafiuddin Ibrahim Shirazi (d. 1626) wrote his book at Bijapur in the first quarter of the 17th century, he sometimes reproduces therein new information and documents on the history of Akbar's reign the veracity of which cannot be reasonably doubted.<sup>40</sup> Salim's '*farman*' of 1601 reproduced by Rafiuddin Ibrahim Shirazi seems to be one such piece. This '*farman*' reads as follows: 'At the instigation of some mischievous persons, my father has abolished the arrangements for the maintenance of *khatib*, *ma'azzan* and *imam* in the mosques and had prohibited the performance of *namaz* in congregation. He has converted many of the mosques into store-houses and stables. It was improper on his part to have acted in this manner. They (recipients of the '*farman*') should resume paying stipends for the maintenance of the mosques, the *khatib*, the *mu'azzan* and *imam* and should induce people to offer

prayers. Any one showing slackness in this respect would be duly punished'.<sup>41</sup>

This '*farman*' leaves little doubt that towards the turn of the century there was a general impression that in some of the mosques *namaz* in congregation was prohibited by Akbar's order. That Salim should try to win the sympathy of the Muslims by playing up this issue during his rebellion is quite understandable. It also appears to suggest that, in Salim's perception, at this time (1601), the feeling of hurt among Muslims over Akbar's attitude towards Islam was so deep and widespread that many of them could be roused to support him against his father by highlighting the issue.

There is available another equally firm piece of evidence pointing in the same direction, i.e. towards the possibility of these adopting a restrictive attitude towards the practitioners of orthodox Islam. This other evidence is a part of Mughal official record pointing to a situation, around 1595, where any one openly offering *namaz* in conformity with orthodox Islamic prescription ran the risk of inviting hostile attention of the Mughal authorities. It is found in a memorandum containing orders recorded by Akbar on requests and queries sent by Murad from Deccan some time in 1595. We are concerned here with one of Akbar's orders recorded on a query by Murad to the effect that if some one in his camp was found performing prayers 'in the manner of imitating theologians (*fuqaha-i taqlid Sha'ar*)', whether he was to be 'forbidden' or was to be 'left in his ways'? This order suggests that a person performing *namaz* was considered deserving 'admonition (*nasihat*) by his superior so as to 'help' him to come to 'the path of reason (*rah-i 'aql*)'. But Murad is also warned that such a person is not to be pressurised as it would amount to violation of *sulh-i kul*.<sup>42</sup> This document clearly point to two aspects of the situation firstly that some of the princes/nobles commanding armies or administering different regions were not clear in their minds, around 1595, if they should prohibit the performance of *namaz*, by individuals serving with them or not and, secondly, that official policy at this time (1595) was for the Mughal administrators to 'admonish' but not pressurise such persons to bring them 'to the path of reason (*aql*)'. One might suggest that this was perhaps the beginning of the drift towards a situation that later, some time prior to Salim's revolt in 1601, led to a general impression that Akbar had prohibited *namaz* in congregation and had also ordered closing down of mosques.

It is, however, clear that this was a brief passing phase. The attitude of trying to discourage *namaz* in congregation and compliance with other *ahkam* of Islam was, apparently given up by Akbar, before *Ain-i Akbari* was completed by 1601. This is attested by a casual statement of Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i Akbari* mentioning that Akbar 'occasionally' joined *namaz* to 'hush the slanderous tongues of the bigots of the present age'. It is a candid admission of the fact that,

towards 1601, Akbar's beliefs and his attitude towards *namaz* were being widely criticized by his ideological adversaries. This, perhaps, made him concerned about the reaction of the common Muslims forcing him to soften his attitude on the performance of *namaz* from around 1601 onwards. One could explain the appreciative references to Akbar's role as King by Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis and Shaikh Nurul Haq in 1605 also in the light of this softening in Akbar's attitude towards Islam during the last four years of his reign.

In the light of the above discussion, one could say with some measure of confidence that the statements of Badauni and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi supported by some of the 17th century Mughal historians alleging critical of *namaz* and closure of mosques by Akbar are partly also corroborated by quite reliable contemporary evidence. The doubts raised by Athar Ali about these statements are thus valid only to a limited extent. It is difficult to deny that Akbar adopted a suppressive attitude towards Islam in a very short passing phase some time during 1595–1601. There is also no denying the fact that such an attitude, which according to Akbar's own observation in 1595 amounted to negating *sulh-i kul*, was given up by him during the last four years of his reign. The hurt that was seemingly caused to the Muslims by Akbar's hostile attitude to Islam during 1595–1601 was, apparently, healed considerably in the last four years of his reign. At the time of his death, in any case, there were no signs of widespread discontent against his policies among the Muslim masses as well as among a majority of orthodox theologians who mattered. On the other hand, at the time of Akbar's death in 1605, the impression of people around him, including some who were devout Sunnis, appeared to be that, despite all his 'innovations', he remained a Muslim till the end.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Athar Ali, 'Akbar and Islam'. *Islamic Society and Culture* in Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad, ed. Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle.
2. For a thorough examination of Badauni's and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's assessment of Akbar in addition to Irfan Habib memorable piece, 'The Political Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah' (*Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Aligarh, 1960) reference may also be made to Athar Abbas Rizvi's pioneer work, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Agra 1964) as well to his more recent study, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (New Delhi, 1975).
3. See for example Ishwari Prasad, *The Mughal Empire*, Allahabad, 1976, p. 346.
4. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, vol. I, ed. by Agha Ahmad Ali, Calcutta, p. 254 and Bayazid Bayat, *Tarikh-i Humayun-wa-Akbar*, ed. Hidayat Husain, Calcutta, p. 74. For an interpretation of this evidence see my 'Wizarat Under Humayun (1545–1555)', *Medieval Indian Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1963, Aligarh, p. 76.
5. *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, p. 20.

6. For a discussion of this evidence see my article 'The Mughal Court Politics During Bairam Khan's Regency' *Medieval India—A Miscellany*, vol. I, Department of History, AMU, Aligarh. Attention is invited to f.n.s. 20, 36, 56, 59.
7. Mun'im Khan close relations with Ali Quli Khan Uzbek and Bairam Khan are discussed in my book, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble: Mun'im Khan Khan-i Khanan 1497–1575*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973.
8. For the continuing influence of *Yasa-i Chingizi* in the Timurid polity down to Humayun's reign see, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble*, Introduction, pp. IX–XIV.
9. Mansura Haider, 'The Yasa-i Chingizi (Tura) in the Medieval Indian Sources' in *Mongolia-Culture, Economy and Politics*, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 61–62. I am beholden to Mansura Haider for the above passage cited from Juwaini.
10. Afzal Husain, 'Growth of Irani Elements in Akbar's Nobility', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1975, pp. 166–79.
11. Antonio Monserrate, *Commentary on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, Cuttack, 1922, p. 197.
12. *Akbarnama*, vol. II, p. 152.
13. *Akbarnama*, vol. III, pp. 241–42.
14. 'Arif Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, ed. Muinuddin Ghauri, Azhar Ali and Imtiaz Ali 'Arshi, Rampur, 1962, pp. 42–43.
15. *Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. III, Nawal Kishore, 1893, pp. 182–83.
16. See Akbar's sayings, *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. III, p. 181 and also *Zubdut Tawarikh*, tr. Elliot, Vol. VI, p. 189 where Shaikh Nurul Haq says that until 986 H/1578 A.D., Akbar used to observe strictly five prayers in a day.
17. *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* Ms., Bri Library, Or. 1929, f. 94a.
18. Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, vol. III, ed. Ahmad Ali and Lees, Calcutta, 1864–9, p. 74.
19. *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 261 Low's comment that *hom* was a substitute for *soma* juice offered by Parsees (*Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, tr., p. 269, f.n. 1) is obviously a slip. Badauni's reference here is to a Hindu ritual. For a more viable explanation see John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English*, reprint, New Delhi, 1977, p. 1242. This term is explained as denoting 'an oblation with clarified butter, a burnt offering, a sacrifice etc.
20. For the improvement in the position of Irani nobles during sixties see my article, 'The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1968, p. 31, & f.n. 7 and also *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble*, pp. XVI–XVII.
21. *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, p. 321.
22. *Sharaif-i 'Usmani*, MS. Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, ff. 26a–32a. Also see 'The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy', f.n. 17.
23. Allauddaulah Qizvini, *Nafais ul-Maasir*, Ms., Br. Library, ff. 62 a&b; Ghausi Shattari, *Gulzar-i Abrar*, Ms., John Rylands Library, f. 207b. Also see a detailed examination of the evidence relating to this themes in Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Centuries*, pp. 116–118.
24. *Majalis*, Maktaba Ibrahimia, 1367, p. 58.
25. *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 201 and vol. III, p. 110.
26. Irfan Habib, 'Rationalism in Medieval Indian Islam' (cyclostyled), paper presented at South Asian Studies Conference, Australia, 1981 [unpublished].
27. *Commentary on his journey to the Court of Akbar*, pp. 132–33.
28. *Muntakhab ut-Tawarikh*, vol. II, p. 211, where Badauni accuses Mulla Muhammad Yazdi, who had arrived from *Wilayat* (Iran) only recently, for trying to attract Akbar towards Shia beliefs. In vol. III, (p. 74), while

commenting on Shaikh Mubarak's career he tends to suggest that it were the 'Iraqis' (*Shias*?) who came to dominate round this time.

29. *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. III, entitled, '*Ahwal-i Hindustan*', pp. 3-4.
30. *Akbarnama*, MS. [Possibly Abul Fazl's first draft], Br. Library, Add. 27, 247, ff. 401b-404b, carry the text of a memorandum containing Akbar's orders on queries and requests sent to him by Murad from Deccan in 1595. This memorandum is not included in the final draft. The statement of Akbar cited above can be read on f. 402a of the same MS.
31. For Abul Fazl's expositions of these theories see the relevant sections of *Ain-i Akbari*, particularly the section entitled, *Riwa-i Rozi*.
32. In the place in *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. III, pp. 177-91. Some of these sayings are recorded in *Akbarnama* as well under the dates where Akbar is supposed to have uttered them.
33. *Akbarnama*, MS., Br. Library, Add. 27, 247, f. 402b.
34. *Ain-i Akbari*, vol. III p, 184, 190.
35. *Har Sah Daftar*, Nawal Kishore, 1862, p. 123.
36. Akbar's rejection of 'divine incarnation' [*hulul*] theory is reflected, as suggested by Athar Ali (his latest paper, 'The Religious World of Jahangir', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Calcutta, 1990, p. 298, f.n. 57), in his saying that in India no one set a claim to prophethood, because of the theory of divine incarnation.  
 Abul Fazl's calling Todar Mal a simpleton [*sada-lauh*] for his attachment to his personal images and his disapproving references to Todar Mal's bigotry (*kinatozi*) are pointers to the ideological reservations that existed between him, and ideologue of *sulh-i kul*, and Todar Mal.  
 In addition to this the author of *Dabistan-i Mazahib* quotes a well argued statement of Akbar criticizing Brahmins for believing in the doctrine of incarnation (*hulul*).
37. See translations of the relevant passages of *Tarikh-i Hakki* (p. 181) and *Zubd ul-Tawarikh* (p. 191) by Elliot, (vol. VI).
38. *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani* ed. Saiyed Muhammad Imamuddin, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Decca, 1962, 670-71.
39. *Tabaqat-i Shah Jahani*, MS., Aligarh Muslim University Collection No. 226, f. 451 as cited by Athar Ali, 'Akbar and Islam', pp. 170-171.
40. See my article, The Tazkirat ul-Muluk by Rafi'uddin Ibrahim Shirazi as a source on the History of Akbar's Reign, *Studies in History*, Vol. II, No. 1, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 41-44.
41. *Tazkirat ul Muluk*, MS. Br. Library, Add. 23, 883, f. 224 b. I have copied the translation of the *farman* from my article in *Social Studies* cited in f.n. 40.
42. *Akbarnama*, MS. Br. Library, Add. 27, 247, f. 404a.

*Akbar's Concept of Sulh-kul, Tulsi's Concept of Maryada and Dadu's Concept of Nipakh:  
A Comparative Study*

Although Akbar's concept of *sulh-kul* has been analyzed in detail by historians, in the context of prevalent sufi concepts in Central and West Asia and India, as also in the broad context of such liberal *nirguna* saints as Kabir in India, little effort has so far been made to see it in the context of the ideas and beliefs put forward in the country during Akbar's own life time. The two most prominent Hindi saint poets of the time, Tulsi and Dadu were contemporaries of Akbar. Thus, according to traditions, Tulsi was born in 1532, and died in 1623; while Dadu was born in 1544 and died in 1603. Although there is a widespread belief that Akbar met both these saints, as was his custom, and that it was at Dadu's instance that he banned cow slaughter in his kingdom, a belief not supported by any historical evidence, it is clear that there was no continuous association between Akbar and these saints, Tulsi having lived and worked mainly at Kashi, and Dadu in Sanganer near modern Jaipur in Rajasthan. However, a comparison of the concepts of the three major figures of the time can help in understanding better the intellectual atmosphere in the country during Akbar's time.

Akbar's concept of *sulh-kul* which evolved gradually and his concept of sovereignty had obvious socio-cultural implications. Thus, according to Abul Fazl, a ruler who was endowed with *farr-i-izidi* (the divine light), had a paternal love towards his subjects so that he did not allow sectarian differences to 'raise the dust of strife.' This, in turn, implied understanding 'the spirit of the age', or what was called in the Mahabharat *Yuga-Dharma*. It implied daily increasing trust in God, and belief in prayer and devotion so that he was not dependent on any religious leaders. He believed in justice which implied curbing the tyrants, and ensuring that inconsiderateness did not 'overstep the proper limits.' He also sat 'on the eminence of propriety' which itself has been interpreted in different ways. At one level it implied considerateness so that 'those who have gone astray have a way left to return without exposing their bad deeds to the public gaze.' But at

\* Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

another by propriety is meant maintenance of 'the health of the body politic' and 'equilibrium'. For the purpose, Abul Fazl divides the society into four groups: warriors, artificers and merchants, the learned, and the husbandmen and labourers. He concludes by saying: 'It is, therefore, obligatory for a king to put each of these in its proper place, and by uniting personal ability with due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish.'<sup>1</sup>

The ideal of Tulsi is complete devotion to Ram (*ananya bhakti*) which is the means of obtaining salvation. He is also the ideal ruler who is called *gharib-niwaz* (protector of the poor), *bandi-chor* (one who releases the innocent from jails), *sahib-sitanath*, etc. He is also *maryada purushottam*, or protector of propriety. *Maryada* or propriety has to be understood both at the societal and the religio-cultural level. At the societal level, *maryada* implied maintenance of the traditional prescribed code of conduct between different members of the family—between father and son, husband and wife, brother and brother, etc. This was exemplified with reference to Ram's own conduct when asked by his father to forsake the throne. But *maryada* above all implies the maintenance of the four-fold divisions of caste.<sup>2</sup>

Tulsi's concept of *varnashram* or the four-fold division of society need not be discussed in detail here.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to say that Tulsi's concept of *maryada* in the societal field has to be seen in conjunction with his concept of *santulan* or balance, equilibrium. Equilibrium in society implied that the prescribed duties of different sections or varnas in society should be maintained strictly. Also that the wicked and evil sections which predominated in society should be kept under strict control.

Tulsi was deeply concerned that during his age of Kaliyuga, the various categories of people or varnas had ceased to discharge the traditional duties allotted to them. The brahmins instead of leading a spiritual life and upholding dharma, had become greedy, accumulated riches and lived a life of low morals. On the other hand, the shudras, whose duty it was to serve the others, considered themselves to be as learned as these brahmins, entered into disputation with them, recited *mantras* and sat on high stools like teachers! Worse they adopted all the brahmanical practices, such as penance, fasting, feasting, etc.<sup>4</sup> Tulsi's concept of equilibrium depended on different sections of society fulfilling their respective allotted duties and not transgressing upon the duties of others. Tulsi considers this as *varnasankar* which in turn led to sorrow, fear, disease and deprivations.<sup>5</sup> The concept of *maryada* implied that action was necessary at various levels—moral, societal and political—to maintain equilibrium and prevent *varnasankar* and all its attendant evils.

Social equilibrium was also threatened by the fact that, according to Tulsi, people with wicked and evil propensities far out-numbered

those with high and medium propensities. He tries to dramatize this belief that people with high, medium, wicked and evil propensities increase in the proportion of one is to ten!<sup>6</sup> Although Tulsi had deep sympathy with the poor and the downtrodden, he severely castigates the large majority of people with wicked and evil propensities whom he also calls '*neech*'.<sup>7</sup> Since it was common to identify the '*neech*' or *malin* (dirty) or *hin* (low) with the '*neech jat*' or low castes,<sup>8</sup> by implication Tulsi slipped into the position of supporting the high caste prejudices against the low castes. Thus, according to his thinking, the *neech* were ungrateful by nature: they were compared to the snake who could never move in a straight line and bit the man who gave him milk, i.e. its benefactor; or like smoke which blots out fire, i.e. its originator.<sup>9</sup> The *neech* becomes arrogant when he amasses a little wealth.<sup>10</sup> For such people, show of consideration was useless, and they had to be kept under tight control.<sup>11</sup> They are compared to dust which lies still as long as it was trampled under foot, but vitiated the atmosphere and polluted even the crown when raised up by the wind.<sup>12</sup>

It might thus be argued that while both Akbar, as expounded by Abul Fazl, and Tulsi had deep sympathy with the poor, their view of society was essentially hierarchical. This justified the institution of kingship. It also justified Tulsi's concept of *maryada* and a caste system based not on birth but intrinsic qualities.<sup>13</sup> It also prepared the ground for cooperation between the religious orders and political authority since both were interested in maintenance of social equilibrium.

In this enterprise, the sant was not alone, but worked in conjunction with *sadhus* and *sajjans*,<sup>14</sup> i.e. those high-minded persons who had either renounced the world, or were still householders.<sup>15</sup>

This brings us to the moral and religious aspects of Tulsi's concept of *maryada*. In the sphere of *dharma* or religion and morality, Tulsi emphasized two aspects: one of the sant upholding the values enunciated by the scriptures, i.e. the *Vedas* and the *Dharmashastras*. This implied also of his remaining within the boundaries of his own *parampara* or, sect or school of thought. While doing so Tulsi makes it clear that caste restrictions did not apply to the devotees—even an outcast (*swapacha*) was superior to a brahman if the former was devotee of Ram and the latter was not.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, a devotee could beg from anyone, even sleep in a mosque.<sup>17</sup> However, Tulsi did not consider these to be a departure from the true *parampara*.

The second aspect of *maryada* in the field of *dharma* was upholding the concept of *lok-hit* or *parhit* i.e., welfare of the people. Apart from personal qualities, a true saint and the *sajjan* were devoted to *paropkar*, or welfare of the others.<sup>18</sup>

'परहित सरिस धरम नहि भाई। परपीड़ा नहिं अघमाई।।'



It is clear that while concern with the welfare of the people was one in which the religious leaders and political authority could cooperate Tulsi's emphasis on scriptural values as being an integral part of *maryada* contained within it seeds of conflict. For Akbar's concept of *sulh-kul* not only implied preventing conflict but were various faiths, but according to them a position of equal honour. This implied putting Islam on par with other religions. It also implied giving lower importance to the scriptures of various religions by emphasizing the fundamental unity of God, that different religions were different ways of reaching Him, and that a true seeker could apprehend God without the mediation of the ordained religious leaders.

It is in this context that he may examine Dadu's concept of *nipakh* or non-sectarianism which conceptually was the nearest to Akbar's concept of *sulh-kul*. As is well known, Dadu was a believer in an attributeless God who was formless and beyond description.

'ना कहीं दिदठा ना सुण्या, ना कोई आखण हार  
ना कोई उत्थो थी फिस, ना डर वार न पार'<sup>19</sup>

He was, however, identified with light (*nur*); and a source of joy (*anand*). For Dadu, concentration on this formless Reality, or repeating His name was a better way to salvation or release than reading any scriptures. As he says:

दादू अलिफ एक अल्लाह का, जे पढ़ जाणै कोइ।  
कुरान कतेवा इलम सब, पढ़ कर पूरा होइ।<sup>20</sup>

From this arose Dadu's belief all religious scriptures were irrelevant, as also that identification with any particular religion or sect was undesirable. As he says:

दादू हह छाड़ में, निर्भय निर्भय होइ।  
लाग रहै उस एक सौ, जहाँ न दूजा कोइ।<sup>21</sup>

[Dadu, if anyone gives up the limits (or sects) and adopts fearlessly the path of *nirpakh*, he would attain to that One where there is no second.]

In order to make his point even clearer, Dadu proclaims that he was neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman, nor could he be bound into any of the sects, but only absorbed in God (Rahman).<sup>22</sup>

Dadu's path of *nipakh* which he also calls the *madhya marg* or the middle path, i.e. eschewing the paths of seclusion or of total absorption in the household, was based on loving devotion to God while leading a normal married life.<sup>23</sup> It had no room for the ordinary religious observances—*roza*, *namaz*, *tasbih*, temple going, etc., and

Dadu denounces as hypocrites all those, especially the brahmans and the mullahs and sheikhs who advocated this path.<sup>24</sup> For Dadu, a true Muslim or *momin* was one who honoured and obeyed the one God, did not inflict pain on others, and behaved with truth and with a sense of self contentment.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, in enunciating a society based on equality, Dadu was one of the rare saints who accorded women a status of equality and honour among men.

Dadu was, of course, aware that such a non-sectarian path was a difficult one, and that it would be chosen by only a few. As he sadly admitted:

दादू परवा परवी संसार सब, निर्पेख विरला कोइ।<sup>26</sup>

In adopting this difficult path, Dadu was sustained by his belief in God's love and munificence, and also by his belief in the essential goodness of man. For Dadu was a stern believer in human equality, and a stout opponent of a society based on caste, or on superiority of family or race. As he says:

'आये एकंकार सब, साँई दिये फठाइ।

दादू न्यारे नाम धर, भिन्न-भिन्न है जाड़।'<sup>27</sup>

Although Dadu does admit that the deceitful far exceeded the trustful,<sup>28</sup> his concept of the essential goodness of man, and their willingness to live in peace and amity comes through. As he says:

'निर्वैरी सब जीव सौं, संत जन सोई।

दादू एकै आत्मा, वैरी नीह कोई।'<sup>29</sup>

Finally, Dadu did not believe that the path of *nipakh* chosen by him could or need be supported by royal authority. Like many sufi saints, he considered the state was to be shunned as one representing both evil and the upholder of hierarchy in society.

To conclude, while we find considerable differences of approach between Tulsi's concept of *maryada* and Dadu's concept of *nipakh*, neither of them went against the fundamental concepts of *sulh-kul*. Thus, Dadu's concept of non-sectarianism, and his distrust of the orthodox religious leaders of the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, coincided with Akbar's own approach. Likewise, Tulsi's concept of *maryada* implied that different sections in society should not transgress from their duties, and that a ruler endowed with *niti* or higher wisdom should be supported by the *sants* for the sake of social stability and welfare. It can, therefore, be said that Akbar's concept of *sulh-kul* reflected the spirit of the age as is apparent from the writings of the leading bhakti saints of the time. However, it did not mean that it was free of internal contradictions, or did not contain

seeds of conflict. Thus, Dadu's concept of *nipakh* was in sharp contradiction to Tulsi's hierarchical concept of society which fully in keeping with Abul Fazl's and Akbar's ideas. Yet Tulsi, who believed in religious toleration, was not in agreement with the concept of *nipakh* which rejected the scriptures and distrusted the established religious leaders. On this point, Akbar's stand was ambivalent. Unlike Dadu, he did not reject the scriptures, but looked for a higher unity.

Thus, Akbar's dilemma was that those religious leaders with whom he had the greatest amount in common, rejected the state as an institution since it was based on hierarchy, injustice and hypocrisy. On the other hand, those religious leaders who were prepared to support him for the sake of social stability, were not quite comfortable with his non-conformist approach to religion. Nevertheless, during Akbar's reign, the concepts of *sulh-kul*, *maryada*, and *nipakh* not only co-existed but supported and interacted with each other.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. M. Blockman, i pp. 3-4.
2. *Manasa* 7/20.
3. For details, see Savitri Chandra, *Social Life and Concepts in Medieval Hindi Bhakti Poetry*, Chandrayan, Delhi, 1983.
4. *Manasa* 7/98-101.
5. *Manasa* 7/100
6. *Dohvali* 340. 'उत्तम मध्यम उत्तम छल दस गुण बड़ विमान'
7. *Doha*. 474.
8. *Manasa* 7/100/3  
For further details see Savitri Chandra 'Social life in the age of Akbar as depicted in the works of Tulsidas' (paper presented on the occasion of the anniversary of the foundation of Fatehpur Sikri, December 1972.)
9. *Manasa* 4/7/4; *Doha*. 334, 337
10. *Manasa* 4/14/2
11. *Manasa* 5/58.
12. *Manasa* 7/106/6,7.
13. *Manasa* 7/20.
14. See Savitri Chandra Shobha, *Samaj aur Sanskriti, Solahvi Shatabdi ke Uttarardha mein*, Delhi, 1976, p. 215.
15. *Doha* 256.
16. *Vairagyasandhipini* 38. 'तुलसी भगत सुख मली, मने रैन दिन रामा'
17. *Kavitavali* 7/106. 'मणि के छेनों मसीहा को सेहने'
18. *Manasa* 7/41 *Vinayapatrika* 172
19. Dadu 6/21
20. Dadu 2/88.
21. Dadu 16/10.
22. Dadu 16/38.  
'ददू ना हम हिन्दू होहिने, नाहम मुसलमाना  
बड़ दर्शन में हम नहीं, हम रजो रहमाना!'
23. Dadu 16/28-32.
24. Dadu 16/38.
25. Dadu 13/28-30.

'मुसलमान जो राखे मान, साई का माने फरमान।  
सारी को सुखदाई होइ, मुसलमान करजानूं सोइ॥'

26. Dadu 16/52.

27. Dadu 29/21; 13/116, 27/14

28. Dadu 13/135. 'दद सुखे बहुत है, सौंवा पिरला कोइ।'

29. Dadu 29/4,2

M. ATHAR ALI\*

## *Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court*

The concluding portion of Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* contains an extensive account of the thoughts and customs of India. No previous effort of this nature and scale was made earlier after that 'great moment in World History' when one of the most outstanding scientists of the Islamic Civilization, Alberuni, set himself to study, expound and analyse the religion and sciences of India in the eleventh century. Abul Fazl's own English translator Jarrett tells us how much Alberuni's work is superior to Abul Fazl's. Without contesting the essence of this judgement one would still argue that (a) while Abul Fazl has derived and 'processed' some material from Alberuni, the bulk of his information comes from newly tapped independent sources and (b) the purpose of the two works are different: Alberuni's to elaborate, understand and criticise, Abul Fazl's to describe and summarise. What is important to us to consider the first of these two reservations? If Abul Fazl had independent sources, what were these?

It is clear from Abul Fazl's account that a considerable part of his information came from oral testimony of the learned among the Brahmans and Jains. We know from Jain accounts that Abul Fazl was throughout in close touch with them just as he was with the Jesuit Fathers.

But another part of the information came from fresh material translated from Sanskrit. The project of translating Sanskrit works at Akbar's Court has been commented upon by such a large number of modern scholars that I claim no discovery here. What I propose to do in this paper is to go all over the Persian evidence for this remarkable endeavour and present it here, throughout in fresh translation and, hopefully, with a few new additional data.

The effort at translating Ancient Indian works began with the arrival of Shaikh Bhawan at Akbar's Court in A.H. 983/1575-76. Badauni tells us:

In this year Shaikh Bhawan, who was a Brahman scholar, came from the countries of Deccan to take service at Court. Having volun-

---

\* National Fellow, ICHR.

tarily obtained the honour of accepting Islam, he joined the circle of the personal attendants (*Khasa-Khailan*) of His Majesty. His Majesty ordered that the *Atharva-Veda* ('Bed Atharban'), which is the fourth one out of the four celebrated books of the Indians, and some of whose injunctions are like those of the Muslim Community, should be explained, and I should render it from the Indian language into Persian. Since there were many obscurities in the text, and the interpreter (Shaikh Bhawan) was unable to explain them, and the intention could not be understood, I reported this to the Emperor. (Thereupon) first, Shaikh Faizi and then Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi was ordered to translate it. He did not render it in a satisfactory manner, and no trace of the work for this reason survives.<sup>1</sup>

One of the reasons the translation did not give satisfaction was, perhaps, because, with the zeal of a convert, Shaikh Bhawan sought to give to the *Atharva-Veda* text meanings which might please his coreligionists. For Badauni goes on to say:

One of the many injunctions of that work is this that until they recite a text that has several *la* letters and sounds like the Muslim confession of faith *la ilaha il l'allah* (There is no god but God), they could not receive salvation. Secondly, beef is permitted upon certain conditions. Further the dead are to be buried, not burnt. Shaikh Bhawan used to come out victorious in debate with the Brahmans of all India; and out of this motive had accepted the True Faith. God be praised.<sup>2</sup>

On this it is fitting to record a rival though later tradition recorded, c. 1653:

Nain Jot says, I said (to Shaikh Bawan, name so spelt). "Translate this passage." When he translated it, its meaning appeared to be wholly contrary and opposite to the meaning of *la ilaha il l'allah*. More, those conditions of beef-eating were contrary to the way of the Muslims. Further, the way of burial was in a different fashion, which is not permitted among the Muslims. His Majesty and all those present laughed at the Brahman (convert), and His Majesty said: "Look at the Muslims and Hindus, that during such a long argument, no one asked, what the meaning of this text is." He praised me considerably.<sup>3</sup>

The date when the translation was completed cannot be precisely established, but Shaikh Ibrahim Sirhindi died in 1583; and so the work must have been finished before this year.<sup>4</sup> It must, therefore have been the earliest work of translation from Sanskrit into Persian. Owing to the difficulties posed by its archaic language, the choice was, perhaps not a fortunate one, being dictated more by Shaikh

Bhawan's assertiveness, in the beginning, than by any independent indication of its contents.

Badauni is, however, not right in saying that the translation was so unsatisfactory as to be forgotten. Abul Fazl records in the *Ain-i Akbari* (c. 1595) that among the important works translated upon Akbar's orders was 'the book *Atharban*, which, according to the beliefs of these people, is one of the four Divine Books, (and which) was translated by Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi into Persian.'<sup>5</sup> No manuscript of this is, however, known to exist.

The second major work to be translated was the immensely long and rich compilation, the *Mahabharata*. The work started in A.H. 990/1582, and Badauni, again, is our main informant as to how it began. Writing under the year A.H. 990/1582, he says:

Collecting together the learned men of India, His Majesty directed that the book *Mahabharat* should be translated. For some nights His Majesty personally (had it) explained to Naqib Khan, who wrote out the resultant text in Persian. On the third night His Majesty summoned me and ordered me to translate it in collaboration with Naqib Khan. In three or four months out of the eighteen chapters (*fan*) of that stock of useless fables, at which eighteen worlds may remain in wonderment, I wrote out two chapters. And what censures I did not hear (from Akbar), so that the accusations that I am an 'unlawful earner' or 'a turnip eater' (apparently expressions used by Akbar) meant as if my destiny from these books was just this. Destiny is destiny! Thereafter Mulla Shiri and Naqib Khan completed that section, and one section Sultan Haji Thanesari 'Munfarid' brought to completion. Shaikh Faizi was then appointed to write it in verse and prose, but he too did not complete more than two Chapters (*fan*). Again, the said Haji wrote out two sections and rectified the errors which were committed in the first round, and fitting one part with another, compiled a hundred fasciculi. The direction was to establish exactitude in a minute manner so that nothing of the original should be lost. In the end upon some fault, His Majesty ordered him (Haji Thanesari) to be dismissed and sent away to Bhakkar, his native city, where he still is. Most of the interpreters and translators are in hell along with Korus and Pandavs, and as for the remaining ones, may God save them, and mercifully destine them to repent. . . . His Majesty named the work *Razmnaama* (Epic), and had it illustrated and transcribed in many copies, and the nobles too were ordered to have it transcribed by way of obtaining blessings. Shaikh Abul Fazl, contrary to the dictates of the commentary on the Qur'anic '*Ayat al-Kursi* that he had composed, wrote a preface of the length of two quires (*juzv*) for that work.<sup>6</sup>

Badauni's passage ought to be read with two other texts. One is the afterword in the British Mus. MS. of the *Razmnama* of Akbar's library, transcribed in A.H. 1007/1598-99, containing chapters (*fan*) XIV-XVIII, i.e. the last portion.<sup>7</sup> The concluding chapter XVIII is very short and the afterword which comes at the end is unfortunately damaged, and some portions cannot be restored. It tells us that the work was commissioned by Akbar on Monday 9 Ramzan (year lost). If the year was 990 A.H./1582 as stated by Badauni, the date would be 27 September 1582. The writer of the afterword is Naqib Khan himself (Naqib Khan, son of 'Abdul Latif al Hasani'). 'He translated it from Sanskrit into the Persian language in the space of one and a half years. Some Brahmans, namely, Rana . . . Sita, Rani, Madas, Nahar, Chitrboj Sen, and Shaikh Bhawan, who with His Majesty's attention, has become honoured by having accepted Islam, read that book and explained it to this sinful author in Hindi, and the author wrote it down in Persian'.<sup>8</sup>

This has the merit of telling us that the translation was carried out, Sanskrit being rendered into Hindi by a set of pundits and the Hindi then rendered into Persian. Unfortunately, the afterword is not dated; but assuming that the translation began in 1582, the work should have finished in 1584.

The second is the brief reference in the *Ain-i Akbari*. The book *Mahabharat*, one of the ancient books of Hindustan, was translated from Hindi into Persian by Naqib Khan, Maulana Abdul Qadir Badauni, and Shaikh Sultan Thanasari. It comprises some one lakh couplets. His Majesty named this ancient epic *Razmnama*.<sup>9</sup>

A little later, the *Ain*, puts the *Razmnama* among those works which were illustrated by Akbar's painters.<sup>10</sup>

The work was certainly complete by 1591, when Akbar sent Prince Murad a copy of the *Razmnama*.<sup>11</sup> It seems, however, that portions went on being read aloud to Akbar, and it was through this that an embarrassing situation arose for Badauni in 1595. On the occasion of Nauroz (20 March 1595), Akbar complained to Abul Fazl that Badauni, whom he had thought to be of mystical bent, was really a 'fanatical theologian' (*faqih-i muta'ssib*). He had let his orthodoxy led him to insert into the portion of the *Razmnama* rendered by him, the concept of the Day of Judgement, which was alien to the Indians who believed in transmigration of souls (*tanasukh*). Badauni had much to do to explain that he had not deviated from the duty of the translator and that Indians did believe that heaven and hell existed as intermediate stages in transmigrations.<sup>12</sup>

Many manuscripts of the *Razmnama* exist.<sup>13</sup>

Abul Fazl says that 'the same persons (who had translated the *Razmnama*) also rendered into Persian the book *Ramayan*, which is one of the ancient compilations of India. It contains the detailed



narrative of the life of Ramchandar, and records many unique points of wisdom.<sup>14</sup> Badauni suggests, however, that he alone was the translator, and that the work began in A.H. 992/1584.

At this time His Majesty ordered me to translate the book *Ramayan*, which is older than the *Mahabharat*. It has 25000 *shloks*, and every *shlok* is a sentence of 65 letters. It is the tale of Ramchandar, *raja* of Awadh (Ayodhya), who is also called Ram, and Hindus worshipped him as an Incarnation of God . . . (*Ramayana* story summarized).<sup>5</sup>

Badauni claims he was able to translate the work in four years; but there is, perhaps, some error in his counting because he was able to present his translation to Akbar only in early 1591. We have the following characteristic passage:

In the month of Jumada I 999 (February-March 1591) having translated the book *Ramayan* in the space of four years and made a copy of the whole, I submitted it to His Majesty. Since in the end I had written (the couplet),

We wrote a tale to the Sultan who fulfils (our wishes)

We burnt up our life for he who gives lives, His Majesty was very pleased, and asked, 'How many quires (*juzv*) it has come to?' I replied, 'In the first instance in summary, nearly seventy quires, then, in the detailed translation, 120 quires.' His Majesty said, 'Write a preface, after the fashion of authors.' Since it had hardly any fare, and I would have to write a preface without any prefatory praise of the Prophet (*na't*), I dissimulated. From that black test, as destructive as my life, I seek refuge with God (But) copying infidelity is not infidelity. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Manuscripts of this translation also survive, one with 176 full-page paintings (from Akbar's atelier?) in the Jaipur Palace.<sup>17</sup> Abul Fazl, indeed, records that the *Ramayan* too was illustrated for Akbar's library.<sup>18</sup>

The *Yogavasishtha* is an appendix to the *Ramayana* dealing with 'all manners of topics including final release.'<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Abul Fazl had this text in mind when he referred to 'the many unique points of wisdom' in connexion with the *Ramayana*.<sup>20</sup> But otherwise he does not seem to refer to this text. But manuscripts exist of a translation by Nizam Panipati, prepared with the help of two pundits, and dedicated to Prince Salim.<sup>21</sup> It must, therefore, have been prepared before 1605. Whether this was received at Akbar's court is, however, uncertain.

The *Haribans* (*Hari-vamsa*) which consists of an account of Kishan (Krishna) Mulla Shiri translated into Persian.<sup>22</sup> We know that Mulla Shiri was a poet of some repute, though not a scholar, at Akbar's court.<sup>23</sup> But unluckily no manuscript of this translation appear to have survived.

The work of translation was extended to non-religious literature as well:

The *Lilavati*, which from amongst the works from the pen of the learned of India in Arithmetic (*hisab*), (my) elder brother Shaikh Abul Faiz Faizi transferred it from a Hindi to a Persian garb; and the book *Tajik*, which on the science of astronomy is a reliable authority, was translated into Persian by Mukammal Khan Gujarati, at His Majesty's instance.<sup>24</sup>

This is Bhaskaracharya's celebrated work. Faizi's translation is extant in several manuscript copies, and two editions (1827, 1854-5) exist. The year (A.H. 995/1507) when the translation was completed is apparently given in the preface, which begins with the praise of Akbar.<sup>25</sup>

Of the second translated work no extant manuscript appears to be recorded. It could be a translation of the Sanskrit work the astronomer Nilkantha wrote on *Jyotish* at Akbar's court, the *Tajikanilkanthi* in Saka 1509/1587.<sup>26</sup>

Abul Fazl also mentions the translation of Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the celebrated history of Kashmir:

The History of Kashmir, which contains the annals of four thousand years of that country Maulana Shah Muhammad Shahabadi rendered from the language of Kashmir (sic! Sanskrit) into Persian.<sup>27</sup>

When Badauni in 1595 saved himself from Imperial wrath over a suspected inaccuracy in his translation of the *Mahabharat*, he had hoped that he would get a suitable post elsewhere and leave the Court with its heretical ways; but Akbar had other ideas:

His Majesty (in Ramazan 1003/May-June 1595) told Shaikh Abul Fazl in my presence, 'Although he (Badauni) would also have served well at the post in Ajmer, yet whenever we give him something to translate, he does it very well and to our satisfaction. We do not wish that he should be separated from us.' Shaikh and others confirmed this. The same day, it was ordered that the Hindi annals, which Sultan Zainul Abidin had translated in past and given the name of *Bahrul Asmar*, I should translate the remaining part and complete it, I was to complete the task in five months, since the latter portion of that work comprised 60 quires. Soon afterwards I was called at night to the throne in the Palace, and asked about the stories in each chapter till dawn. His Majesty said: Since in Part one which Sultan Zainul Abidin had had translated, the Persian is quite unidiomatic, you should write this out afresh in idiomatic language. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Badauni was given 10,000 copper *tankas* and a horse in *inam*, and hoped to finish his task quickly in two or three months.<sup>29</sup> But he finished his *Tarikh* apparently before he finished his translation.

It is curious that Badauni does not refer to Shah Muhammad Shahabadi at all. The surviving manuscripts of the Persian *Rajatarangini* defective as they are, do not seem to elucidate the matter.<sup>30</sup> One possibility is that Shah Muhammad Shahabadi was the translator of the work under Zainul 'Abidin, and the work was merely transcribed for Akbar's library; in that case a slip must be assumed on the part of Abul Fazl. The task of a fresh rendering was assigned to Badauni, after the *Ain-i Akbari* had been completed, so that the new translation would not be mentioned by Abul Fazl at all.

I may mention that I exclude Faizi's *Nal Daman* from consideration here because it is not really a translation by a retelling in Persian of the Indian tale.

When one looks at Akbar's translation project, one realises that its centre piece is the *Mahabharata*; and it should therefore be of little surprise to us that the Vaishnavite facet of Hinduism was more prominent at Akbar's Court than the Saivite. The *Upanishads* and Sankaracharya are not represented. It was left to Akbar's great grandson Dara Shukoh, to add the *Upanishads* to the Brahmanical literature available in Persian, through a splendid translation, *Sirr-i-Akbar*. The scientific texts translated were also far too few. But it would be churlish to question the extent and coverage of Akbar's translation project in this manner. What stands out, when, to use Abul Fazl's favourite phrase, 'the veil is lifted', is the lofty vision and grandiose design of a shared, unified intellectual heritage of all mankind.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhabut Tawarikh*, ed. Ali Ahamad and Lees, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1864-69, II, pp. 212-13
2. *Ibid.*, II, p. 213.
3. Anonymous, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Bombay ed; p. 265. I have not been able to identify Nain Jot, apparently a Brahman divine or scholar at Akbar's Court.
4. Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1873-87, III, pp. 408-9.
5. *Ain-i Akbari*, Blochmann, Calcutta, 1866-67, I, pp. 115-16.
6. Badauni, II, pp. 319-21.
7. Br.Mus.Or. 12,076. This MS is illustrated by Akbar's painters. The date of transcription is given at the end of Chapter (*fan*) XVII on f. 136a.
8. Br.Mus.Or. 12,076 f. 138b. It is interesting to find Shaikh Bhawan reappearing as a translator despite his misadventures with the *Atharva-Veda*.
9. *Ain-i Akbari*, p. 115.
10. *Ain*, I, pp. 117-18.
11. See an early version of the *Akbarnama*, cited by Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Akbar's Personality Traits and World View,' Seminar on Akbar at Aligarh, 9-11 October 1992 (Unpublished).

12. Badauni, II, pp. 398-400.
13. See list in D.N. Marshall, *Mughals in India, a Bibliographical Survey*, Bombay, 1967, pp. 18-19.
14. *Ain-i Akbari*, I, pp. 115.
15. Badauni, II, pp. 336-7.
16. Badauni, II, p. 366.
17. Marshall, op.cit., p. 19.
18. *Ain-i Akbari*, p. 117.
19. A.B. Keith, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1920, p. 480.
20. *Ain-i Akbari*, p. 115.
21. Marshall, op.cit., p. 377.
22. *Ain-i Akbari*, II, p. 116.
23. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, ed. B.De, II, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 490-91.
24. *Ain-i Akbari*, I, p. 116.
25. C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature; A Bibliographical Survey*, II (1), London, 1972, pp. 4-5.
26. See Marshall, op.cit., p. 374.
27. *Ain-i Akbari*, I, p. 116.
28. Badauni, II, pp. 401-2.
29. Ibid, p. 402.
30. Storey, op.cit., II (3) London, 1939, p. 679, where the year of Badauni's translation is wrongly given as 999/1590-91.

## *The Profile of Akbar in Contemporary Rajasthani Literature*

Akbar's Rajput policy has so far been studied essentially from how it appeared from the vantage-point of the Mughal court. Alternatively, there has been an implicit assumption that bardic Rajasthan sang of those who opposed Mughal authority and saw Akbar as an invader. It is, therefore, important to see how Akbar is actually viewed in 16th and 17th century Rajasthani literature. The present paper aims at offering a preliminary analysis of this fairly extensive literature.

### I

Since Akbar had established a relationship with the old ruling families of Rajasthan, the relationship with these families was quite intimate and Akbar gave a personal touch to it by marrying Rajput princesses. But on the other hand he failed to establish a peaceful relationship with the Rana of Mewar, although in the beginning he initiated negotiations. Exaggeration, no doubt, is often entered in these portrayals of image and personality of Akbar but these depictions are nevertheless a clear testimony to the esteem which the great Emperor was held in Rajasthan.

Contemporary bardic literature of Rajasthan concentrates on the various aspects of Akbar's life. It assigns him high sounding titles such as *shriji*<sup>1</sup>, *sah*<sup>2</sup>, *nath*<sup>3</sup> (Pers, *malik*), and *aspati*<sup>4</sup> and *chhatrapati*<sup>5</sup> etc, to Akbar and *chakar* (servant) or *Hukmi chakar*<sup>6</sup> to the Rajput chiefs.

The *Dalpat Vilas* provides us with rare glimpses of different facets of Akbar's personality. The description becomes more reliable and faithful because the author is said to have been an eyewitness of all the contemporary incidents of Akbar.<sup>7</sup> It portrays qualities of Akbar such as his youthful courage, kindness, sensitiveness and benevolence. Akbar set an example for his soldiers, while in his first military campaign of his career against Hemu, by putting his horse first in the channel (*nallah*) which was in full fury at that time. This compelled the soldiers to follow their master or leader<sup>8</sup> and had the desired psychological impact on their military mentality. Youthful courage

\* Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University.

was also accompanied by tenderness in young Akbar which was witnessed by the author when Akbar refused to kill the defeated Hemu with his own hands.<sup>9</sup>

Akbar's large heartedness and respect for bravery is portrayed in a bardic poem. He had shown full respect to bravery even of his enemy like Rana Pratap. Akbar was deeply saddened and his eyes got wet when he received the news of the Rana's death,<sup>10</sup> which was a rare and noble gesture.

Akbar seems to have been quite sensitive and emotional in his approach towards the Rajput chiefs and tried his best to give a personal touch to it. On the death of Bhopal (son of Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner) he conveyed heart-felt condolences to Dalpat (brother of the deceased) and enquiries about his wives.<sup>11</sup> Moreover his assurance to Dalpat saying that he was like his son (*beta*) and had all the right to get *tika* of Bikaner certainly might have had soothing effect on the prince.<sup>12</sup> He dined at the residence of Rupsi, the chief of Marôth, as a sign of intimacy.<sup>13</sup> The suicide by one of his petty Rajput chief, named Randhirot, a Rathor, before his own eyes shocked him, and he was stunned for a while.<sup>14</sup> Although these happenings appear to have been relatively trivial, they had their impact on the Rajput mind.

Many songs (*geet*) in praise of Akbar were composed by contemporary poets. Similes were employed for the Emperor to compare him with a wide spectrum of gods. He was portrayed as an incarnation of Lord Rama, Krishna, Lukshman and Arjun.<sup>15</sup>

It is generally believed that Akbar was not a lettered person but a bardic poet thinks otherwise. In his eyes the great Emperor was well versed in many branches of knowledge such as language, music and religious books such as the Kuran and Puranas. This indicates a recognition of Akbar's interest in the sacred books of both the Hindus and Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

The military successes of Akbar obtained full appreciation from poets, sometimes with the usual poetical exaggeration. It is said that Akbar's military successes shook the throne of Lord Indra (the chief god associated with war and rain) and consequently residents (Gods) of *Indralok* (the mythological empire of Lord Indra) complained to their Lord about it for fear of annexation of their territories.<sup>17</sup> They were soothed by Indra's assurance that Akbar would not trespass on their territories.

## II

Some contemporary literature of Rajasthan faced a unique dilemma while portraying the relation between the Rana and Akbar because of their allegiance to both the personalities.

The love of Rana Pratap for independence and the determination with which he continued his struggle against Akbar for his entire life

were widely glorified.<sup>18</sup> The Rana was portrayed as the protector of tradition of the Rajput chivalry (*Kshatra-Dharam*)<sup>19</sup> and *Hindu-Dharam* (Hindu religion or way of life).<sup>20</sup> But, sometimes both Akbar and Rana Pratap were praised for their loyalty to their respective religion (*dharam*).<sup>21</sup>

Even then the Mughal Emperor did not fall from grace in the eyes of poets but obtained full appreciation from them. The celebrated capture of Chitor got a full appreciation from a bardic poet though purely from the military point of view. The reason for success was ascribed to the superior gunnery (*aatish baji*) of Akbar.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, a seventeenth century Mewar bardic poet employees quite rare similes for Maharana Pratap as Arjun (hero of the Mahabharat) and Karun (legendary figure and elder brother of Arjun) for Akbar. The portrayal of tactics employed by soldiers, in a scene of war of both sides are said to have been witnessed by gods assumes enormous significance.<sup>23</sup> The couplets (*Dohas*) composed in the praise of Rana Pratap did not contain any trace of hostility to Akbar.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Man Singh is also praised from bardic poets for his campaign against Rana Pratap.<sup>25</sup> While on the other hand, the bravery and courage of Rana Pratap is said to have found a place in the heart of Akbar.<sup>26</sup>

Seventy-six couplets, titled *Virud Chhihatar*, were composed and their authorship was assigned to Dusa Aadha, a well known poet probably at Akbar's court.<sup>27</sup> In these couplets, Rana Pratap was depicted as the saviour of the land (*des*) and other Hindus (rulers), who had submitted before Akbar, were depicted as dogs (*Kukar*).

A close examination shows that this work is studded with modern concepts and sensibility. The concept of land or nation was entirely alien in the sixteenth century India. Use of derogatory language towards Hindu rulers other than Rana Pratap does not match with the original author's language because he had shown full respect to other chiefs. Therefore, it can be presumed that this kind of tendency on interpolation might have gained ground during more recent day.

Akbar adopted a systematic policy of recruitment of the Rajput chiefs in his service and got quite favourable response from them. It brought peace, stability and economic prosperity to the concerned states and enhanced their strength to that of their nobles. It created congenial atmosphere necessary for creation of literature. Acceptance of Mughal overlordship by these Rajput chiefs was in acclaimed by the bards.<sup>28</sup>

After the submission, the Rajput chiefs are said to have remained always loyal to Akbar. They accompanied Mughal armies in the battlefield with their Rajput contingents.<sup>29</sup> Their loyalty in these campaigns was duly awarded.<sup>30</sup> A bardic poem in the praise of Raja Man Singh of Amber narrates that he successfully suppressed Hindu as well as Muslim rulers to establish Mughal suzerainty over them.<sup>31</sup> To prove their loyalty the Rajputs even fought against their kith and

kin. The cases of Raja Kith Rai Singh of Bikaner,<sup>32</sup> and Sagat Singh Sisodia of Udaipur are significant examples of this nature. Interestingly, Sayat Singh was the younger brother of Rana Pratap<sup>33</sup> who accompanied the Mughal army against Chittor as well as fought on the Mughal side in the battlefield of Haldighati. Another Sisodia prince Jagmal, the elder son of Rana Udai Singh, also joined Akbar and fought against Rao Surtan of Sirohi to establish Mughal hegemony there.<sup>34</sup>

Sacrifice of life in the battlefield by the Rajput chiefs and of their contingents was considered as the highest expression of their loyalty to their master, Akbar.<sup>36</sup> The example of the Sisodia Jagmal was an index of loyalty in the battlefield where he sacrificed his life while carrying out Akbar's orders.<sup>37</sup> Sacrificing life in the battlefield for his master became a major mark of merit in contemporary Rajasthani literature.<sup>38</sup>

Besides showing loyalty in the battlefield,<sup>39</sup> Rajput chiefs already owing Akbar adopted the policy of persuasion to bring other Rajput chiefs sound to accept mughal service. By this means such states as those of Bundi<sup>40</sup> and Sirhoi were brought under Mughal paramountcy.

The policy of Akbar to establish matrimonial relations with the Rajput ruling families appeared to have been based on the premise that it would develop intimacy with these chiefs having local roots. These marriages were noticed as normal alliances in literature. Bharmal, the Kachhwah Rajput chief, was the first who gave his daughter Harkhubai in marriage to Akbar.<sup>41</sup> He was followed by the rulers of Bikaner<sup>42</sup> and Jodhpur.<sup>43</sup> Such marriages were not an innovation of Akbar; Maldeo, a powerful ruler of Jodhpur, gave three of his daughters in marriage to the Muslim rulers.<sup>41</sup>

The sensitiveness and reverence of Akbar towards these marriages are portrayed in the literature. He is said to have followed all formalities to get married with a Rajput princess. The case of marriage with two princesses of Bikaner is the best example of this kind. After getting an auspicious day and time for the marriages he came all the way to Nagaur to marry two nieces of Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner.<sup>45</sup> The Sisodias never gave their daughter to Akbar and they disfavoured these marriages. Their hatred toward these marriages is portrayed in a sarcastic manner in some verses.<sup>46</sup>

We do not come across any literary composition about the rites followed in these marriages. But inference can be obtained on the basis of the terms employed invariably for these marriages. The terms *parnai* and *vyah* (for marrying daughters) imply performance of Hindu rituals in these marriages. The absence of the term *nikah* or smiliar kind of terms further strengthens our supposition. We do not find any such term as *dola* which appears to have crept into literature in a derogatory sense in the late nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup>



It is striking to note that not only did Akbar himself marry with the Rajput princesses, but he adopted a Kachhwa princess as his daughter and arranged her marriage with a Rajput chief.<sup>48</sup> This is an emotional and glaring example of Akbar's intimate relationship with the Rajput families which is highlighted in bardic literature.

The recruitment of the Rajput chiefs into Mughal service had a deep and far-reaching impact on the existing class-relationships of the Rajput chiefs. The methods and tactics adopted by Akbar were of significance for the consolidation of the Mughal power in different regions of Rajasthan. His policy varied in relations to individual Rajput chiefs. His attitude had been soft towards those who had submitted easily and tough to those who had opposed. To maintain checks and balances, he recruited various petty small chiefs of sub-classes when the higher chief refused to submit, case of Rathors would illustrate it. Members of *Kumpawat*, a sub-class of Rathors, were recruited into Mughal service when Rao Chander Sen refused to submit.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, military assistance by Akbar was provided to Rao Ram, the younger brother of the Rao, against Rao Chander Sen to isolate him. Two Sisodia princes were given place in the Mughal nobility,<sup>50</sup> to put pressure on the Rana to accept Mughal overlordship. However, this policy was also bound to create lasting tensions within clans or even families.<sup>51</sup>

The above survey shows that in contemporary and near contemporary Rajasthani literature Akbar occupies an important and respectable place. He did not have 'image' problem and was seen by the bards as any other Hindu king of high stature. As usual he too was thought to be an incarnation of Hindu gods (Appendix 1 and 3). This is quite significant because it suggested that it was obligatory for Hindu subjects to follow the will of Akbar.<sup>52</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Dalpat Vilas*, ed. Rawat Saraswat, (Bikaner 1960), p. 82.
2. A *Geet* in the *Pracheen Rajasthani Geet*, ed. Kaviraja Mohan Singh (Udaipur 1957), p. 36. Besides this, the term is employed almost everywhere as prefix or suffix for Akbar.
3. *Git Badshah Akbar Sah-ro* in *Rajasthani Veer Geet Sangrah*, II ed. Shobhagya Singh Shekhawat (Jodhpur 1968), pp. 145-46.
4. *Ajit Vilas*, ed. Shivdutt Dan Barhat, (Jodhpur 1984), p. 15.
5. Kavi Jan, *Kyam Khan Rasa*, ed. Dasurath Sharma (Jodhpur 1983), p. 57; Dalpati Mishra, *Jaswant Udhyot*, ed. Agar Chand Nahta (Bikaner 1949), pp. 69-70.
6. Muhnot Nainsi, *Khyat*, ed. Badri Prasad Sakariya. I (Jodhpur 1960), p. 160.
7. Cf. *Dalpat Vilas*. pp. 1-18.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
9. *Ibid.*
10. On hearing the news of the Rana's death a poet present in Akbar's court expressed his heartfelt sorrow praising him before Akbar. Instead of getting

annoyed Akbar became emotional. The poem goes like this: 'You (Pratap) did not get branded your horse and did not lower your turban. For this, everybody had expressed full appreciation for you. You carried out (the administration of) your country on your one soldier. You did not go to attend *nauroj* and did not enter in the imperial camp. Even you did not go beneath the imperial *jharokha* (window). All the world used to shake before your superiority. Therefore, O Pratap, Akbar had grilled his tongue under his teeth and had a sorrowful breath and tears rolled out of his eyes. Ultimately, you emerged victorious. Cf. Dursa Andha, *Maharana Pratap Singh-ro Chappay* in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, ed. Bhupati Ram Sakriya (Udaipur, 1983),

11. *Dalpat Vilas*, p. 89.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-103.
15. *Git Akbar Badsah-ro* in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, op.cit., p. 249. Full translation of the text is set out in the Appendix 1.
16. Dungarsi Ratnu, '*Chand Badsah Akbar-ro* in *Dungarsi Ratnu Granthavali*, ed. Shobhagya Singh Sekhawat (Jodhpur), pp. 140-41. Dungarsi was a contemporary to Akbar.
17. *Git Badsah Akbar-ro*, op.cit., No. 105 and 106, pp. 145-47. Translation of both the text is put in Appendices 2 and 3.
18. Innumerable songs were composed in praise of Akbar, see *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, op.cit., pp. 158-68.
19. *Gita Ranaji Pratap Singhji*, *Ibid.*, p. 161.
20. *Git Maharana Pratap Singh Udaisinghot-ro*, *Ibid.*, p. 160.
21. *Git Akbar aur Maharana Pratap*, *Ibid.*, p. 163.
22. *Rathor Ratan Singh-ri-vari* etc. No. 92, ff. 25 (b)-26 (a), A.S.L. Bikaner. Girdhar Aashiyi, *Sagat-Raso* (Udaipur 1987), p. 26. This epic was compiled in 1670's.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-35.
24. *Rana Pratap-ra-Duha* in *Phutkar Duha Tatha Mohowa-ro-Samo*, No. 143, A.S.L. Bikaner.
25. *Raja Mansingh-ra-Jhulna*, *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, pp. 104-11.
26. *Git Akbar aur Maharana Pratap*, op.cit., p. 163; *Maharana Pratap Singh-ro-Chhapay*, op.cit., 159.
27. *Virud Chhihatari* in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, op.cit., pp. 34-45. Two prominent scholars, Moti Lal Menaria and Shakti Das Kaviya, assert that this work is a fabrication but the Editor, Bhupatiram Sakariya insists on it being genuine. The linguistic objections urged by Menaria and Kavia seem valid, and the verses are probably not to be assigned to the 15th century.
28. *Dalpat Vilas*, pp. 14-15; Even in the history of Kachhwahas, in verse composed in the nineteenth century, the submission by Bharmal was appreciated, Cf. Kavi Chand, ed. Giriya Sharma and Satyanarayan Swamy (Bikaner 1991), pp. 282-83.
29. Mota Raja Udai Singh accompanied the Mughal army against Gujarat and Sirohi, See, *Raja Udai Singh-ri-Bat* in *Parampara*, Vol. 11, pp. 91-21.
30. Rai Singh was awarded for his Gujarat campaign by assigning additional *parganas*, *Dalpat-Vilas*, pp. 22-23.
31. *Gita Raja Mansingh Bhagwantdasot Kachhwah-ro* in *Rajasthani-Veer-Geet Sangrah*, ed. Shobhagya Singh Shehawat, Vol. II, pp. 171-72. There is another long poem his campaign against Rana Pratap was appreciated, see *Rao Mansingh-ra-Jhulna*, in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*, op.cit., pp. 104-11.
32. In obeying Akbar, Rao Rai Singh established his rule over the territories of Rao Chanderson. Both belonged to the same Rathor clan and were descendents of Rao

- Jodha. See *Rao Chandersen-ri-bat in Parampara*, Vol. 11, p. 181; *Ajit Vilas*, ed. Shivduttam Barhat (Jodhpur 1984), pp. 13-14.
33. Sagat Singh, the younger son of Rana Udai Singh deserted his father and joined Akbar's service. He accompanied the Mughal army against his father at Chitor. He also participated in the battle of Haldighati against his brother, Rana Pratap. See *Sagat-Raso*, op. cit., pp. 9-30. Since the epic is in the praise of its hero Sagat Singh, some inaccuracies are entered to save its hero from embarrassment.
  34. *Rao Mane Devre-ri-Bat*, No. 21218, ff. 172 (b)-184 (a), A.S.L. Bikaner; Muhnot Nainsi, *Khyat*, I ed. B.P. Sakariya, pp. 22-26 and 149-50.
  35. Maharaja Sur Singh of Jodhpur had lost a large number of his followers while chasing Bahadurshah in Mandu, see *Maharaja Surajsinghji-re-Raj-ri Bat*, in *Parampara*, op.cit., p. 96. A list of those who sacrificed their lives is given.
  36. *Rao Mane Devre-ri-Bat*, op.cit.
  37. In the campaign against Mirza Ibrahim, Akbar chased him only with few Rajput chiefs, and Bhopat, the son of Raja Bharmal lost his life. Cf. *Raisinghji Jagmalji-nu-bhelo-Geet*, *Dursa Grantnawali*, op. cit., p. 204.
  38. *Raja Mansinghji-ra-Jhulna*, op.cit., pp. 104-111; *Geet Raja Mansingh Bhagwant-dasot Kachhwah-ro*, op.cit., pp. 171-72.
  39. The fort of Rathambhor was under the charge of Rao Surjan of Bundi who was in the service of the Rana. After persuasion by Raja Bhagwant Das, he surrendered the fort on the condition that he will continue to remain loyal to the Rana and not proceed against him. (Cf. Nainsi, *Khyat*, I pp. III-112).
  40. While Rai Singh of Bikaner was on another mission in Sorath, he persuaded Rao Surtan of Sirohi to accept Mughal suzerainty. Half of his state was made *Khalisa* and the agreement was honoured by Akbar. Moreover, the Rao declared himself as Akbar's *hukmi-chakar* (servant-under-orders), see *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.
  41. *Bat Kachhwah-ri*, No. 206/2, ff. 29(a)-32 (b), A.S.L. Bikaner.
  42. Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner submitted and gave his two nieces in marriage to Akbar, see *Dalpat-Vilas*, pp. 14-15.
  43. Maharaja Udai Singh's daughter was given to Akbar in marriage, see *Rathora-ri-Vansavali*, No. 231/4, f. 14 (a), A.S.L. Bikaner.
  44. *Rathora-ri-Vanshawali-ne-Pidhiyan-ne-Phutkar Vatan*, No. 233/6, A.S.L. Bikaner.
  45. *Dalpat-Vilas*, pp. 14-15.
  46. Rana Pratap's hostility to these marriages is depicted in one of the compositions of a contemporary poet Jada Mehdu, *Git*, in *Pracheen Rajasthani Geet*, op.cit., pp. 36-37.
  47. *Bankidas-ri-khyat*, ed. Narottam Das Swami, (Jodhpur 1960), p. 192.
  48. Nainsi, *Khyat*, I, p. 325.
  49. *Rao Chandersen-ri-Bat*, op.cit., p. 82.
  50. *Sagat-Raso*, op.cit., pp. 20-35; Nainsi, *Khyat*, I, pp. 22-23.
  51. The case of Bundi is a glaring example where joining of the Mughal service by a brother, named Bhoja, annoyed another brother, Duda, and created permanent rift between the two, see Nainsi, *Khyat*, III, pp. 266-67.
  52. A contemporary poet says that since Akbar is an incarnation of God therefore; we (subjects) obey him whatever he orders. (Cf. *Dungarsi Ratnu Granthavali*, ed. Shobhagya Singh Shekhawat, p. 141).

## APPENDIX-1

Dursa Aadha was a contemporary of Akbar and composed a lyric in praise of Akbar.

'Are you arches of Lakshman or Arjun? Are you destroyer of Rawana or Kans? O Akbar, the son of Humayun you clear my doubts that whose incarnation you are? It is beyond the capacity of *shastras* and human beings (to tell this). O Emperor, you tell this truth whether you are the destroyer of *bhramar* (the black bee) or crocodile. Whether you are Ram (*giri taran*) salvator of a stone-slab or Krishna (*giridhari*). Your charisma is beyond (the understanding) of a Jogi, you are not a human being but certainly a great incarnation. Whether you are the destroyer of Meghanad (brother of Rawan) or Karan (legendary character of the *Mahabharata*). Either you are an incarnation of Ram (*Raghawanshi*) or Krishna (*Yadhuvanshi*). O, Lord of Delhi, you tell me whose incarnation you are? (Are you) a human being or God? Whether you are the destroyer of powerful or the piercer of black cobra. The poet asks, O, Akbar tell me who you are out of the four Lakshman, Arjun, Ram and Krishna?

## APPENDIX-2

The rulers d. who have their empires on the other side of the seas, were frightened after hearing this news that Akbar would cross these and attack their territories. The rulers abandoned their territories when the news of the well-equipped army of Akbar reached them. The son of Humayun broke the power (of the enemies) with his sword. The rulers did not wear their crowns (*chhatri*) out of fear. The commander (*nath*) of the powerful contingent destroys his enemies and occupies their territories and incorporates them in his empire.

## APPENDIX-3

After establishing dominance in the north and east, the boundaries (of Akbar's empire) in the west is extended upto the seas. The news of military campaigns against the Deccan-reached there and the throne of Lord Indra trembled. Subjugation of the east and west created fear in the minds of the gods. None would remain unconquered. When (Akbar), the unconquered hero, reached the Deccan, then all ran away from the court of Lord Indra (*Indralok*). All the states had accepted Mughal sovereignty and consequently, Lord Indra came under the influence (of Akbar). The Lord assured gods that though he had destroyed all his opponents Akbar would certainly not disturb you (that is the gods).

DR. SHIRIN MEHTA\*

## *Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat*

Historians are turning towards closer integration of history and literature to understand realities regarding man-in-society. Literature has moulded men's minds and conduct and have better claim on historians. It provides deeper insights into realities and complexities of human nature. The structures of social consciousness such as attitudes, ideas, values, beliefs, identities—crystallised into arts and literature better reveal the depth of mentalite than the stereotyped historical source material. For this reason, historians sometimes do use literature as historical data to get clues though not as an absolute value that transcends history.

The study of the various facets of Akbar's personality as expressed in the contemporary Jain literature is central to this paper. The staple of this paper has been drawn heavily from the literary texts rather than conventional sources of historians's craft.<sup>1</sup>

The Jain literature was very voluminous since the social base of its sangha was very broad and cross cultural sections of the society had embraced it. But when Akbar invaded Gujarat in 1573, the Jain religious order was in a state of disruption and dismay. The two major divisions of the Jains—Svetamber and Digamber already existed. In the middle ages the centrifugal forces began to be operative powerfully, it further splitted into sects, subsects and subsections viz.; Sanghas, Ganas, Gachchhas and Shakhas. Each section of people began to propagate their own views as a result corpous of literature came into existence. It assumed different forms, for example *Rasas* were interesting account of the manners and customs of the age and usually extolling Jain faith. *Prashashti Lekhas* were a kind of poetic bardic literature. They were eulogies on contemporary Kings and courtiers. *Prabandhas* were historical records, giving glimpses of the social life of the people. *Maha Kavyas* were the description of events in a poetic form. There were also many *Shilalekhs* or inscriptions placed at places of Jain worship. There was no dearth of manuscripts available at L.D. Institute of Indology, B.J. Institute of Learning and Research,

\* Professor of History, Gujarat University.

Ahmedabad and Forbes Sahitya Sabha, Bombay mainly because of the reticence of the old Jains who did not like to print or publish their Granthas. This literature written as it was in Sanskrit, Prakrit and old Gujarati which breathed the spirit of the age and local colour.

This Jain literature in fact depicted the history of the relationship of the Jains and the Moghuls in which Akbar received disproportionate amount of their attention. This was produced by the learned Jains who were linguists and accomplished writers. They all belonged to Svetamber branch and either of Tapa Gachchha or Khartar Gachcha section. They were the eyewitness and had actually participated in the religious esoteric discussion at Ibadatkhana—Prathna Gruha. These studies presents microscopic details of manners, gestures and even the sense of humour of the emperor. They belonged to the first squad of 35 monks, who were sent earlier from Gujarat as well as to second batch of 67 monks who accompanied their head priest Hiravijaysuri to escort him. They arrived in the capital in 1583. But the discussions at Ibadatkhana had been continued since 1573 and Akbar had already proclaimed his new religion Din-i-ilahi in 1579. Still however, the persuasive influence of Jain monks of eminence continued to be operative on Akbar for the last twenty years of his life.<sup>2</sup>

Hiravijay Suri (1526–1595) the supreme pontiff of Svetamber branch of Jain sect was the chief exponent of Jain ideology, had mastered scriptures and was linguist. He entered into the order at the age of 13, became acharya in 1554 at the age of 28 and reached to the highest position of Patdhari, the chief of Jain congregation in Gujarat. There was a large community of some 2000 students learning under him.<sup>3</sup> He highly impressed Akbar and created in him the interest from Jain philosophy. He debated with him for three years. The emperor was so much pleased that he conferred the title of 'Jagat Guru' or world teacher upon him. On his request, Akbar issued Farman in 1584 prohibiting the slaughter of animals for twelve days during Paryusana festival, removed Jazia tax levied on Hindus in Gujarat and mundka tax collected from Hindus at the places of pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> Among his ardent disciples Devavimal Gani composed, *Hira Saubhgya Kavya* and Padmasagar wrote, *Jagat Guru Kavya* both were the works in Sanskrit written in 1590. They presented the most authentic accounts of the relationship of Akbar and Suri. At the instance of Akbar, Suri left behind him Santichandra, his brilliant disciple in 1587. The emperor held him in high esteem, conferred on him the title of Upadhyay. He composed for Akbar a panegyric in Sanskrit entitled *Kruparasa Kosa* (treasury of the merciful deeds of the emperor), which contained 128 verses. He used to recite this poem before the emperor in which he had mentioned the heroic conquests, catholic religious outlook and the qualities of Akbar. At his request Akbar adopted stringent policy and went on prohibiting slaughter of animals. He dispatched farmans to

that effect to Suri in 1592. Akbar developed the fondness for Jain ideology that he repeatedly requested Suri to send his itinerary one after the other. Santichandra left Bhanuchandra and his disciple Siddhichandra at royal court in 1587.<sup>5</sup> They lived upto Jahangir's time. Siddhichandra, a great scholar of Sanskrit and Persian, wrote *Bhanuchandra Gani Charit* to express his gratitude towards his teacher. It was didactic and brilliant exposition of the discussion that took place at the Court between the Jain teachers and Abul Fazl, Birbal and Akbar. The Jain theory of *Karma* (action), *Moksha* (freedom from life cycle of birth, old age and death) *Ahimsa* (non-violence) vis-a-vis Islamic tenets were debated. Siddhichandra made profound impression upon the King by reciting thousand different names of the Sun—

'Itishri Padshahshri Akbar Jallaludin  
Surya Sahasranam Adhyapakh, Shri  
Shantrujaytirtha Karmochar Suguru Vidhayak  
Mahapadhgay Bhanuchandragani Chir Chitayam  
Shatavadhan Sadhak Pramudit Badshah  
Shri Akbar Pradat Khushham Parabhidhan.'

This verse mentions how Siddhichandra performed 108 *avathanas* i.e. attending 108 things at a time, a marvellous feat of memory.<sup>6</sup> Akbar awarded him the title of 'Khush-faham'—man of sharp intelligence.

Akbar sent from Lahore a farman to Suri in 1592. He expressed his intense desire to see his trusted lieutenant and destined successor the learned Vijaysensuri. He stayed at the court from 1593 to 1595. He had also ardent and accomplished band of disciples stayed with him at the court. One of them was Dayakushalgani who framed in a musical rhythm *Vijaysen Rasa* in 1590. Another disciple named Gunavijaygani who wrote *Vijay Prasasti Kavya* in dear memory of his master in 1632. Later, on Vallabhdev who was given the title Pathak by Akbar created *Vijay Dev Suri Mahatmyam*. These works noted that at Ibadatkhana their master gave lucid exposition of the Jain views regarding the existence of God and entered into controversy with Brahmins. He quoted scriptures and verses marshalling facts. He argued based upon sound logic. He had an edge over them with the result the emperor called him 'Savai Hira Vijay Suri' (superior even to Hiravijaya). In fact he was not, Abul Fazl placed him in the third category of monks out of five types. He ranked Hirvijaysuri the first.<sup>7</sup> Akbar was said by these Jain writer to have advanced further along the line of supporting the fundamental Jain doctrine of *Ahimsa*. At the instance of Vijaysen Suri Akbar had forbidden the fish catching in the river Indus and Dabar lake near Sikri for four months in the year and ordered *Amari Ghoshna*—prohibition on killing animals and also against the system of *eachet* i.e. confiscation of the property of the dead without heir by the state and against the practice of taking

prisoners in the war. The farman to this effect was dispatched to Suri in 1592 by Akbar. This was substantiated by Kunvervijay in the following Hari Vijay Saloko,<sup>8</sup> which is in Old Gujarati.

..... Akbar Kiddhi tam Ghaneri  
Bi Kutch mango Jaye hir Surinda  
Sarvar dabar name, Raj  
Nakhe Jinha Jal Hajar, tinya  
Na Nalihe Jal Koh. . . .  
Gurupati boddh Akbar Bhup  
Jiva Daya Kanhi Sarup  
Ban Melya Kari Upagar  
Jiva Chhodavya Lakh Hajar,  
Gaya na Mari, Vartavi Mahina Chhni  
Amari, Sabal Ghano Kar Jijiya Nam,  
Te Pan Munkavyo Tiha Tin Tham,  
Santruje Tirth Girnare Jeh, Avichal  
Mukta Karay Teh. . .

These statements in the Jain biographical Rasas are confirmed by the inscription of 1593-94 placed in Adishvar Temple on mount Shatrunjaya. These works also mentioned that Akbar granted Suri the Siddhachal, Girnar, Taranga Keshrinath and Abu in Gujarat as also the five hills of Rajgir and the hills of Samet Shikhar in Bengal, as also all other Jain temples and places of pilgrimage in the empire so that no one may kill any animal there.<sup>9</sup>

There were other Jain works in which Akbar was focused along with the prominent Jain priests as *Kalyan Vijay Gani no Ras* written by Jinvijaygani. The *Tapa Gachchha Pattavali* of Dharmasagar Upadhyay and *Shripal Rasa* of Yashogani are manuscripts. Yashogani composed his verse in 1682 after Shripal, the enlightened ruler of Malwa, who joined the Jain fold under the influence of Siddhachandra the winner of the title Khush-faham at royal court.

Yashogani quoted,<sup>10</sup>

Akbar Dinker Tulya Pratapiji,  
Sagle Jagmahi Vyapiji,  
Sahi Sabhamati Vad Karine,  
Jin mat Thirta Bahu Adar Jas Sahi Didho.

Illusions like Sun, the mighty ruler Akbar, all powerful one, revived the glory of Jainism after he made it passed through the severe controversy at the court. He made Jainism to stand on sound footings.

Akbar was centred in the work of an ordinary Jain Shravak also. One such work is *Karma Chandra Charit* by Kavi Jayasoma who was Akbar's contemporary. Karma Chandra was Oswal Vaishya, belonged to Khartar Gachchha section. By sheer dint of merit he made his fortune, secured position of a minister at the King Kalyan Malla's court.



of Bikaner. He worked for his Gachehha and made rich donations. He earned the goodwill of Akbar by defeating Sultanate power Muhammad Husain Mirza who invaded Gujarat. He could introduce various Khartar Gachchha pontiffs to the royal court at Sikri. Akbar held them in high esteem, conferred on them titles and showered various concessions as he granted to tapa Gachchha priests. All the hills were opened to their worship also.<sup>12</sup>

The contemporary Jain literature had focused on multi-dimensional personality of Akbar. Akbar was always referred as omniscient, all pervading, all powerful monarch or as Chakravarty Rāja—paramount power. Beautiful similes, analogies, metaphors were used for him. Akbar was portrayed as Mugdalechandramoon among Moghuls since Jains considered moon the most auspicious heavenly body. Devavimalgani with his vivid imagination drew picture of his conquest as follows,<sup>13</sup>

The formation of thick clouds of Sands  
in the sky, the movements of invulnerable  
Army of Akbar the cause, the skylark  
Couple could not see each other even during  
the day and wept bitterly, but  
characterless women had nice time.

The religious policy of Akbar excited great admiration among Jains. His liberal outlook and catholicity earned their deep admirations. In fact Akbar shifted to already mobilised situation in Gujarat. The ground was much prepared earlier by the exponent of Bhakti school like Raidas, Kabir, Dadu, Mira, Narsimha Mehta etc. . . . They advocated monotheism, casteless society and cultural synthesis.<sup>14</sup> Akbar was the first ruler to comprehend the regional roots of the plural societies of India which contain sub-systems that were distinct from each other. He undertook componential approach, respected regional collective identities, encouraged the development of different traditions, culture, religion vis-a-vis he pronounced the theory of melting pot to integrate and assimilate the ethnic diversity. His pronouncement of Din-e-ilahi and his esoteric conversations at Ibadutkhana were instrument to materialise his views.

The aspect of the influence of Jainism on Akbar got wide coverage in almost all the writings of the Jain ascetics. The fact was equally collaborated by Muslim sources also. The Jain priests carried profound effect on monarch by their didactic discourses and skilful prodigality so much so that he encouraged his sons Shekhuji (Jahangir), Murad and Daniyar to participate in the discussion. Akbar took to his heart the Jain doctrine of Ahimsa. Al Badaoni stated that, 'The slaughter of animals became more and more stringent so that the total number of days for which this injunction was made amounted to six months in the year'.<sup>15</sup> Once Hira Vijay Suri told Badshah, 'How could man's

stomach be the tomb of animals'. According to the contemporary Muslim historians Abul Fazl as well Al Baduoni Badshah developed an aversion for animal food. Akbar also appreciated the Jain doctrine of Karma or action which caused man's happiness or unhappiness and not the God the cause. The emperor also began to question the validity of the Islamic tenets of revelations, resurrection and the day of judgement.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, Jains used Akbar as a great cementing force to arrest too much polarisation and diversification within the Jain religious order. They eagerly aspired for royal patronage and interlocking of state and religion which they lost during sultanate period on two counts. Firstly, they wanted to highten their status and raise their leverage with the local provincial authorities at whose hands they suffered lot. The Moghul officials were keen to arrest Jain Pontiffs on slightest pretext either on charge of forceful conversion or enlisting the child for diksha—acceptance of ascetism or responsible for creating natural calamities. As a result, when Akbar invited Suri through proper channels of the viceroy of Ahmedabad, Shitabkhan and also through Jain Sangh or congregation of Agra, it was hailed by the Jains with tumultuous ovation.<sup>17</sup> It provided feedback to their honour and prestige. Secondly they also wanted to use their relationship with the Mughal court as a binding force to unite the warring sections. Akbar himself proved instrument in providing common platform by granting similar concessions to Tapa Gachha and Khartar Gachehha sections to use the hills of Rajputana, Bengal and Gujarat as common places for pilgrimage. March, 1594 was the red-letter date for Jains. Under the able leadership of Suri the Jains from Punjab, Bengal Rajputana and Gujarat gathered at Santrunjaya.<sup>18</sup>

From the Moghuls side also the equilibrium was well maintained in between their relationship with the Jains. The adventurous emperor had very little time for esoteric discussions with the Jains. Even then he insisted on continued presence of Jain ascetics at his court to seek the support of Jains—Shravakas who were master businessmen rich and prosperous. They had always provided to the state the men, money and resources.<sup>19</sup>

The transference from literature to history does raise the issue of methodology but the exercise is worth it.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Deva Vimal Gani, *Hira Saubhagya Mahakavya* (1590); Padmasagar, *Jagat Guru Mahakavya* (1590) Santichandra Upadhyay, *Krupa Rasa Kosh* (1586); Siddhichandra, *Bhanuchandra Gani Caritra*; Hrushbhadeva, *Hira Vijay Rasa* (1629); Dharma Sagar, *Tapa Gachehha Pattavali* (1590); Jinachandra Suri, *Akbar Pratibodh Rasa* (1592) Jayasomagani, *Shri Karma Chandra Caritra*

- (1579); Gunavijay, *Vijay Prashashti Kavya* (1632); Vallabh Pathak, *Vijay Deva Suri Mahatmyam* (1643).
2. Devavimal Gani, *Hira Saubhagya Maha Kavya* (1590) translated by Sadhvi Sulochnaji in Gujarati, (Bombay, 1980) part II, p. 159.
  3. Muniraj Vidya Vijay, *Surishwar and Samrat* (in Gujarati), (Bhavnagar, 1920) p. 570.
  4. Padmasagar, *Jagat Guru Maha Kavya* (1590) quoted in Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, *Jain Sahitya no Sankshipta Itihas* (Gujarati) (Bombay, 1933), p. 547.
  5. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, 'Jain Priest at the Court of Akbar' *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society*, (Bombay), January 1942, Vol. IV, No. 7, p. 14.
  6. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, *Jain Sahitya no Sakshipta Itihas*, (Bombay, 1933) p. 555.
  7. Surishwar and Samrat, n. 3 p. 448.
  8. Kunverji, 'Hirvijay Saloko', Jinvijayji ed; *Jain Itihasik Gurjar Kavya Sanchaya* (Bhavnagar, 1926) p. 166.
  9. Gunvijaya, *Vijay Prashashti Kavya*; Dayakushal Gani, Labhodaya Rasa translated in Surishwar and Samrat, n. 3, p. 153.
  10. Itihasik Gurjar Kavya Sanchaya, n.8, p. 180.
  11. Jayasoma, Karmachandra Charit, translated into Gujarati by Gunvijay in 1579. *Itihas Gurjar Kavya Sanchaya*, p. 188.
  12. Ibid.
  13. Sadhvi Sulochna translated, *Hira Saubhagya Maha Kavya*, (Bombay, 1980) part II, Chapter 10, p. 79.
  14. Vilas A. Sangave, *Jain Community : A Social Survey* (Bombay, 1980) pp. 46-60.
  15. M.S. Commisariat, 'Epigraphic and other Records in Gujarat Relating to the Jain Saint Hira Vijay-Suri', *Journal of Gujarat Research Society*, (Bombay), July 1941 Vol. III, No.3, pp. 146-158.
  16. M.D. Desai, 'Jain Priest at the Court of Akbar', *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society*, (Bombay) January 1942, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 1-17.
  17. Muniraj Vijayji, *Surishwar and Samrat* (Bombay, 1933), pp. 84-85.
  18. M.S. Commisariat, n. 14, p. 148.
  19. M.J. Mehta, *Merchants and Sharaf of Gujarat* (New Delhi, 1990) p. 5.

## *Akbar and His Age : A Symposium\**

PROFESSOR SATISH CHANDRA

One of the things which we would be discussing is the contemporary relevance of Akbar. The present state of India thinks that there is a continuity between its efforts today and the efforts of Akbar during the sixteenth century. In other words, that the attempt of Akbar was to build a state not only based on toleration between various segments of society, but to build a ruling apparatus, a ruling class, where members from various religions could have an honoured place; that there is a continuity of effort in the type of state which we have been wanting to build in India and the type of state that Akbar tried to build in his own days. That immediately calls into account why Akbar was not fully successful and what are the expectations, what are the probabilities of our succeeding, because, just as there was a sharp orthodox reaction against the policies of Akbar, we see the simmerings of some kind of a movement against what is called a 'secular' or a 'pseudo-secular' state in India today.

The second point, of course, is the question of building a modern India and when we think in terms of building a modern India, it is not merely the question of the ruling class, it is even more the question of the type of society which one has in mind. This is a point which Professor Irfan Habib has highlighted in the seminar, that the type of society which Akbar had in mind was very much a society in which some of the worst features of obscurantist ideas were not allowed free play, such as, for instance, restricting or trying to restrict 'sati', or trying to modernise the syllabus more in tune with contemporary thinking. There is also an attempt to develop India's trade, both overland and overseas, so that India develops, India becomes more a part of the developing world. Now these are aspects where much greater attention would be needed. I would restrict myself to the first point—the question of his attempt to build a composite ruling class.

As soon as we talk of building a composite ruling class, the question of Akbar's so-called 'Rajput policy' comes immediately to mind. I use the word 'so-called' because, obviously if we use the word 'Rajputs'

---

\* Held on 17 October at 1992 Delhi University.

then Rajputs are widespread all over northern India—but normally in our history books when we talk of the Rajput policy, we have very much in mind the relationship with the rulers of Rajasthan because these were the rulers with whom some of the closest links were made by the Mughals. I do not want to go into the controversy as to the motives of Akbar in entering into this alliance, whether it was the starting point of a new type of a state or whether it was a Machiavellian effort on his part to make Rajputs fight against Rajputs and in the process use the Rajputs as the sword arm of the empire, or as some recent thinking suggests, whether the Mughals were trying to use the Rajputs against the rebellious nobles in Akbar's court. Or there is a new thinking which has developed that it was part and parcel of a larger policy of alliance with the zamindars, because after the expulsion of the Mughals from India by the Afghans, it had been realised that they would not be able to rule over India without the alliance of the zamindars—a point which is underlined by Abul Fazl in the *Akbarnamah*, in the time of Humayun, before Akbar came to the throne, a point also emphasised by Farid Bhakkari in his well-known work *Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin* written in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Now, none of these theories fully fit. My detailed analysis in the seminar tries to show that what is called Akbar's 'Rajput policy' really comes to fruition around the year 1578–79. And that the role of the marriage with the Kachchawaha family has been rather overestimated because during this early phase although Bhagwant Das and Man Singh are close to Akbar, we do not find any large-scale involvement of the Rajputs in the fighting which goes on at the time. In fact it is noticeable that when some of the Uzbek nobles rose in rebellion and Bhagwant Das was at the court of Akbar, he was given the responsibility of guarding the Imperial camp including the royal ladies. This was individually an important charge but it did not signify any great faith on Akbar's part in the fighting capabilities of the Rajputs, or should we say, no special effort on his part, no special desire on his part to use the Rajputs as some kind of a makeweight. It is also possible to argue that the type of matrimonial relationships which Akbar had, whereby the girl was not alienated from the family, was also not unique—not only were such alliances a part of the political horse-trading, shall we say, or political manoeuvre, it was something which had developed from the fifteenth century onwards. For instance, Ratnavati, the daughter of Jodhpur's ruler Maldeo, had been married earlier to Haji Khan Pathan, who was one of the slaves of Sher Shah. After the death of Haji Khan Pathan, Ratnavati comes back to the house of Chandrasen. She lives there, and finally dies in Jodhpur in 1592, if I remember the date, and we are told by Banke Dass in his well known *Khyat* that a *gumthi* was made in her name there. Now, a *gumthi*, for your information, is not a tomb because when you

have a tomb you imagine that a person is buried. A *gumthi* is a memorial very often made after the burning of a person whose memory you want to remember. So, it could seem that at least at the time of her death she was a Hindu. Whether she remained a Hindu while she was the wife of Haji Khan Pathan or was allowed to reconvert to Hinduism, these are things that we do not know. My point is that this aspect of Akbar's marriage is important, that he continued to maintain relations with the relations of the girls he married and that they were not forced to change their religion, this is important but not unique. Not only is this not unique during this early phase as far as the relations of Akbar with the Rajputs are concerned, they do not move outside the broad framework of relations with the local rajas which had developed during the fifteenth century. This, for instance, was very much the structure which we find during the period of the Lodis. We have many Hindu rajas who were in alliance with the Lodis and not only were they in alliance with the Lodis, they fought against other Hindu rajas, they fought against other rebels.

So, as far as this aspect of the policy is concerned, it only emerges clearly after 1578 when the Rajput rajas are called to the Panjab, their jagirs are allotted there and they are utilised in fighting not against rebel Hindus but against Mirza Hakim, against the half-brother of Akbar. So, they then get involved within the main framework of the nobility.

Now, the point which is important to notice is that, in a manner of speaking, the Rajput rajas represent what you might call the local ruling class. Alliance with the local ruling class of various regions was important for political stabilisation. Not only for political stabilisation, it had, generally speaking, a healthy effect. People could see important Rajput rajas holding offices, governorships and other positions.

I think that the point which has been underestimated in our giving somewhat of an exaggerated and one-sided emphasis on the alliance of the Mughals with the Rajputs, is the neglect of that section of the Hindus and Muslims who were indigenous to the country and who were given opportunities for rising in the service for the first time by Akbar. And here I am referring to people such as Todar Mal. As we know, Todar Mal was a Khatri, he came from a fairly ordinary family. He emerges not only as one who became the leading revenue expert of the empire, but during the early phase he is far more active in the military operations of the Mughals than the Rajputs. Again, a man like Patar Dass, another Khatri who starts his life as the superintendent of the elephant stables, gradually rises, is appointed *diwan* of Bengal, then of Bihar, then of Kabul, takes part in military operations in different parts of the empire, is given the title of 'Raja Bikramjit', and during the time of Jahangir he is made the head of

what is considered to be the leading enterprise in the Mughal Empire at that time, that is the *Top-khana*.

We had been discussing the rise of the bowmen in the cavalry of the Mughal Empire and the role of the Rajputs in that. But I would say that what is even more important is the role of the artillery and Patar Dass is made the *Mir-atish*. We are told that he had 50,000 matchlock men under his supervision, 3,000 rifle arms under his direct command, and 15 parganas, the income of which was assigned to its maintenance. The point that I am trying to emphasise is the type of ruling class which emerges—you have the high Rajputs, the revenue experts, the Indian Muslims, i.e. the *Shaikhzadas*. I think that it is important to bring out that during the Sultanat period there was always a tremendous prejudice against the employment, against the giving of high offices to Indian Muslims.

It was during Akbar's time that not only the Rajputs, not only the other Hindus, but Indian Muslims forged ahead. So we have the emergence of a new type of a ruling class—a participating ruling class. The experiment which Akbar embarked upon, of establishing a composite ruling class, where people of different religions, of different sections, both Muslim and Hindu were involved, was a challenge, but this challenge to be successful had to move forward all the time. It had to broaden, it had to deepen itself. What were the conditions necessary for expanding this alliance by bringing into it different regional elites and different social classes? By different regional elites you have the Marathas, Afghans of East India, and many other elites in different parts of the country.

But there were other more important social segments like the business people, the *Khud-kashtas* who are called today the intermediate classes, the rich peasants, who in a manner of speaking, controlled the countryside. I think it is important for us to understand why such a broadening could not take place during the seventeenth century. Did the Mughal-Rajput alliance help or was it a hindrance in the process, because, after all, the Mughal-Rajput alliance, with all the benefits it conferred, was still an alliance between elites.

These I think are some of the questions which were relevant for the seventeenth century and I have a suspicion that they are relevant for us even today.

PROFESSOR J.S. GREWAL

I would be speaking on the religious environment during Akbar's time—the socio-cultural context of Akbar's reign.

One of the early British historians, namely Elphinstone, refers to Akbar as 'the national king of India'. He was trying to place Akbar, in what in those days was called 'Hindu-Muslim rapprochement' and therefore when he referred to Akbar as the 'national king of India', he

meant, first of all, that Akbar was a king for both Hindus and Muslims who were supposed to constitute the Indian population during the sixteenth century. There was a strand of enlightenment in Elphinstone's world view and therefore what he appreciated in Akbar was religious toleration and also the idea of what was then called 'deism' to which we can refer to as 'theism' today. He also had a strand of romanticism in his world view and therefore he had a lot of appreciation for what was regarded as 'nationalism' in the early nineteenth century. Now, this was the legacy that was elaborated by our own nationalist historians but the context in which they placed Akbar was the context of a 'composite culture'. The Allahabad school of historians is very well known for this.

However, this appreciation for this great king of our country was not merely a creation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If we go to the pre-colonial writers of India there is a lot of appreciation for Akbar. Panjabi writer (i.e. a writer of the Panjab writing in Persian) towards the period when Panjab was going to be annexed by the British, a historian called Ganesh Dass, in his work called *Charbagh-i-Panjab*, has very explicit and emphatic appreciation for Akbar and Akbar alone—not for any other Mughal ruler. And the things which he mentions as praiseworthy are more or less the same for which we appreciate Akbar today. Therefore, this appreciation for Akbar was not really a creation of the British, though they reinforced the idea and this was reinterpreted by our nationalist historians. This appreciation for Akbar was there right from his own times, which reminds me that a Panjabi writer who is believed to be a contemporary of Akbar, writing in Panjabi—in fact the first Panjabi poet who is known for his treatment of the well-known tale of Heer and Ranjha—refers to Akbar several times in his text and he has great appreciation for him. At the most he could belong to the early seventeenth century.

From the early seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, there is a consistent appreciation of Akbar in Panjabi literature or in writers from the Panjab.

Secondly, I would like to mention that there are several aspects of Akbar's reign and his age which have been studied by historians. What is relevant to us at the moment is one important element in his polity which can be referred to as the 'suzerain-vassal' relationship. It is important to us because it was this quality through which indigenous rulers, Indian rulers, including Muslims and Hindus—they could be inducted into that polity.

Administration, where *mansabdari* is an important aspect, has been studied, in which context we talk of a 'composite ruling class'. Then, the agrarian system of the Mughals, particularly of Akbar, has been studied in detail for the sort of agrarian production and encouragement to trade which was there, leading to a greater degree of urbanisation



and some knowledge of technology resulting in relative prosperity in a very large part of the country.

Then, some of the socio-cultural aspects, translations from Sanskrit into Persian, painting, architecture, historiography and religious and secular literature in both Persian and the regional languages, knowledge of these aspects—the socio-cultural dimensions of Akbar's reign—is very much there.

Now the question arises—Were these developments isolated or were these different aspects of the reign? Do they have some interconnection, some inter-relationships? I pose this question because particularly when we come to the religious environment, the question becomes extremely important. What I am going to suggest is that there was a close connection between the religious environment of Akbar and the ideas and attitudes which he came to imbibe and then to promote.

In 1604 a book which is now called the *Guru Granth Sahab* was compiled by Guru Arjun and in this are included the compositions of Kabir. There is one particular composition in which it is very emphatically stated—'We are neither Hindu nor Musalman—we are God's men'. This idea is extremely important. I would like to elaborate only this single idea with reference to the larger background of the religious history of the country and with reference to the developments which were taking place during the sixteenth century itself.

For the larger background I would just like to mention that the use of the term 'Hinduism' (not Hindu but 'Hinduism'), came into currency during the nineteenth century and became much more current during the twentieth—it is with us now. But the use of this term has very important implications for our study of the past. For example, if you go to the sixteenth century, I do not believe that you would really find 'Hinduism' there. You will find 'Hindus' but not 'Hinduism'. Because if you are looking for very important religious developments in the history of our country after the Vedic age, you have to identify three important developments which we can refer to as *Shaivism*, *Vaishnavism* and *Shaktivism*. These do not really exhaust every religious belief and practice of the religious history of the country but they do account for a very large chunk.

Furthermore, when we came to the medieval centuries we find some new developments within these larger movements. For example, within *Shaivism* we have a movement called *Hat-yog* which was supported by the Gorakhnathi *yogis* in northern India; within *Vaishnavism* we have a more familiar movement called *Bhakti* and within Islam, which in one sense was new to the country, we have a movement, or a component within Islam, called *Sufism*.

It is also suggested that by the fifteenth century some kind of synthesis was being worked out, taking out elements from all these three important new movements which I have mentioned, and this synthesis is generally referred to as the *sant* synthesis. Kabir is

supposed to be the best exponent of this. I may also add that the common denominator of these movements was devotional theism and this devotional theism, particularly in the south, embraced *Shaivism* as well. It did not remain confined to *Vaishnavism*. You can see therefore that what I refer to as devotional theism was a very comprehensive movement in the Indian subcontinent during the medieval centuries.

I have already referred to the common denominator, i.e. devotion to one God. The idea of devotion does not really apply so much to the *yogis* as to the others because the *yogis* insisted on self-effort, as the word itself implies. Nevertheless, they did contribute to the new developments and that is why they are brought in.

In *Vaishnav Bhakti*, the new movements were the cults of Ram and Krishna with the ideas of incarnation, worship of idols in temples, pilgrimage, devotional and ritualistic worship (in one case it could be ritual and in other ritualistic). They used the language of the people as well as Sanskrit, they were relatively liberal particularly towards the lower caste and partly also women. So, when we say they were relatively liberal, what I mean is that they threw their path, the path of salvation, open to a much larger section of the society that what was true of the earlier denominations and earlier systems.

Among the *Sufis* the most important idea was of course the idea of 'love' as the relationship between Man and God and a logical culmination of this was the idea of unification through different stages.

They are known to have used regional languages and Persian for the expression of their ideas and attitudes and the idea of equality appears to be a little more important among the *Sufis* than among the *Vaishnav Bhakti* reformers. Not only the lower castes but even women were given equal status by some of the *Sufis*.

When we come to the '*sant*' tradition, we notice that they do not subscribe to the idea of incarnation and therefore have no idols. They practise congregational worship and in some cases they evolve new scriptures, discarding the old scriptures whether it is the *Quran*, *Vedas* or the *Puranas*. What is extremely important to them, is the idea of transcending the categories of Hindu and Muslim. That is why I have bracketed Nanak, Kabir and Shah Hussain. This is also the idea of equality particularly in relation to the lower castes, but in the case of Nanak who is generally bracketed with the *sants*, also in relation to women.

If we come to the Sikh movement in Akbar's time, we notice, first of all, the increase in their numbers their relative prosperity which enables the Gurus to undertake public projects, like Ramdasapur which is now known as Amritsar and a few other towns, and some of these became centres of pilgrimage. So, new institutions are developed from that relative prosperity.

What is quite interesting to notice here also is the increasing tension within the community leading to dissensions of several kinds. It is interesting to note that Akbar always intervened in these internal conflicts, and also in litigation, on behalf of the nominated successor of Guru Nanak, i.e. Guru Arjun during his reign.

Now was it really accidental, was Akbar just being factional, in supporting one party against the other? What I wish to emphasise is that it was not accidental at all. If Akbar stood for the ideal of *Sulh-kul* in Persian, then the Sikh Gurus, we all know, stood for the ideal of *Sarbat ka Bhala*, which is almost a literal translation of the Persian term into Punjabi.

Lastly, therefore, I would like to suggest that a part of the secret of Akbar's greatness lies in the fact that he was in almost complete harmony with the ideas and attitudes of the most creative minds of his age. Therefore, though Akbar the person died, the ideals which he represented, they flourished, and that is why he is still relevant to us today.

PROFESSOR IRFAN HABIB

... I would like to discuss here the reasons for which Akbar is being celebrated on this occasion—not because he was just a ruler, but because of the ideas, or the new ideology that he was committed to. Marx had said that the real world was the reflex of the religious world and Max Weber emphasises the development of ideology, of ideas, of ethics of a particular kind as very necessary for a particular kind of development, for example, the rational spirit was defined as very important for the development of capitalism. Therefore, ideologies are important. In our culture we have had strong religious traditions of different types. There were the religious traditions coming from ancient India, which by Mughal times began to be described under the term 'Hindu'. The author of '*Dabistan-i-Mazahib*' is hard put to describe what the beliefs of a Hindu are and ultimately he takes shelter in a very convenient position but the only possible position—Hindus are those who have been arguing with each other within the same framework of argument over the centuries. If they recognise each other as persons whom we can either support or oppose in a religious argument, then both parties are Hindus. The Jains, although they rejected Brahminism, were still Hindus because they were arguing and polemicising with Brahmins. Such arguments were not taking place between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims did not share any basic terminology with the others.

Muslims had their own framework, an ideological framework, the Semitic framework which from today's point of view of what we know as Hinduism, might not look very alien because of the nineteenth

century transformations of Hinduism which are making many Hindus see Hinduism as a kind of the Semitic religion.

Now, what strikes us immediately is that Akbar rejects both the ideological traditions, both the religious traditions. It is not an ideological act of acceptance and synthesis as one often seems to think. It is an act of rejection—essentially an act of rejection, and the part of synthesising, if there is any possibility of synthesis, is secondary, in ideological terms.

I would like therefore to draw attention to a particular passage in *Ain-i-Akbari* which I feel is extremely important.

I would like you to please follow the line of argument. According to Abul Fazl the important thing which has happened is the creation of intellect within man by God. Remember, it is not the act of creation of man, it is the act of creation of intellect in man. And when intellect is created, he argues, in *Ain-i-Rahnamuni*, the 'Spiritual Guidance' chapter in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, then two things happen. On the one hand reason develops and on the other hand self-interest interferes.

Therefore, where ideas developed differences also developed. And two false things are created by the intellect. They are not created by God, they are created by the intellect—*Din* and *Duniya*—i.e. Religion and the Temporal World. Both are untrue. Religion and *Din* are untrue. It is an illusory creation, a deception of the intellect. Temporal World is also a deception of the intellect. Things are not what they seem. In other words, there is a complete rejection of religion, of *Din*, not spiritual relationship between God and man but the religious form of that relationship. And I think it is very important because from it follows many other things.

Now, if *Din* and *Duniya* are delusions and lead to differences and quarrels, then how is this situation to be remedied? It is to be remedied by an assertion of the only spiritual truth, that man and his intellect are created by God and therefore, since there is one God and everything that he creates or emanates from him is one unity, therefore all mankind is one and all that divides, whether affairs of *Din*, whether religion or affairs of the world, are divisive and those divisions must be rejected. And that rejection of these divisions and the assertion of the spiritual unity of mankind as reflective of the unity of God, was called *Sulh-kul*—the concept of 'Absolute Peace' or as Professor Rizvi translates it, 'Universal Peace'. It doesn't mean 'Peace With All'—that is a mistranslation. *Sulh-kul* is Total Peace, also Universal Peace. This too as a term and as a concept has its roots in the mystic philosophical traditions going back to the great Spanish thinker and ultimately West Asian thinker, by migration, Ibn al Arabi.

Now, *Sulh-kul* means that steps should be carried out to impress upon everyone the main spiritual truth and to tell everyone that all quarrels should not be permitted. And this means that this work can only be carried out by a sovereign who is the representative of God.

And therefore, Akbar and Abul Fazl and his circle built up a theory of sovereignty which had two pillars—one is that of 'Social Contract' which Abul Fazl puts forward as '*Rawa-i-Rozi*', which as you know is very similar to the European 'Social Contract Theory' in the seventeenth century, which derives from early Greek thought. Both the Muslim world and the Renaissance inherited the theory of Social Contract. So, there is a social contract between the king and the subject, so much so, that like some of the ancient Indian thinkers, Abul Fazl calls taxes as the 'wages of sovereignty'.

The other thing is that since the emperor is God's representative, then just as the God does not withhold the sun and the rain from those who do not believe in him, so too the king as God's representative cannot hold back bounties on the basis of religion. This is a very important principle of Mughal polity which continues to be restated until the time of Aurangzeb and later. It might have been violated but it remains one of the pillars of the Mughal theory of sovereignty that the king must behave like God and not discriminate in giving his bounties amongst his subjects.

The idea of *Insan-i-Kamil* or 'Perfect Man' inherited from Ibn al Arabi is now attributed to this particular sovereign.

The whole idea then is that the emperor or sovereign must initiate a positive policy of tolerance. All religions must be heard and tolerated. And therefore it is quite easy to see that while Akbar on the one hand rejects religion altogether, he is quite willing to take part in Muslim rights and practices, to send money to the Ajmer shrine and whenever he so feels, to Mecca.

He can also indulge in Jain spirituals as there is very strong contemporary Jain evidence. There is similar Jesuit evidence that he wanted to take part in Christian rituals that he had a very high opinion of the 'New Testament', which of course any cultured and civilised man would have, and so on.

*Sulh-kul* and the 'Policy of Tolerance' then meant that while you ideologically reject religion, you upheld *Sulh-kul*. I think that explains a passage which is found in an early version of the *Akbarnamah* in a correspondence between Murad and Akbar. Murad says: 'What am I to do with these people who still undergo physical exercises and think that it is the worship of God, which is of course for Muslims, *Namaz*, and for others their main ritualistic worship.' And Akbar says: 'You should persuade him not to do this because physical exercises cannot be equated with worship of God, but if they don't agree, then you should let them worship God in whatever manner they feel because we believe in *Sulh-kul*.'

This also explains why Akbar very firmly rejected image worship, so much so, that he thought poorly of Todar Mal because Todar Mal was an inveterate worshipper of images, a fanatical worshipper at that. Nevertheless, Akbar gave large grants of lands to temples which

he himself never visited, like Vrindavan, because he was not willing to accept that image worship was possible. This policy of tolerance is not acceptable to any religion. We might say today that all religions are very good, very liberal and so on, but in our heart of hearts we know that it is untrue. Religions, by their very nature, cannot tolerate other religions just as two business firms cannot tolerate each other. I mean it is inconceivable and I think that Monserrate was much more honest than we are today when he said that Akbar's toleration of all religions is something that violates the law of all religions. No religion tolerates another religion. No religion says that other religions are true. If they are not true then they ought to be suppressed for they put forward wrong sinful views about God.

Therefore when putting forward a policy of tolerance of this kind it was essential to marry this policy of tolerance to a rejection of *Din*. This is why it is particularly perverse to call Akbar's religious views as *Din-i-Ilahi*; attributing to him a term that he would have rejected with much disgust.

I would also like to point out that Akbar's time saw a resurgence of a study of the Indian culture, a resurgence of the study of India's past. The whole series of translations into Persian of a very high standard of text like the Mahabharata, Ramayana and other texts of science and mathematics, *Lilavati*, the *Jyotish*, and others, were done officially and read out to Akbar. Finally it climaxed in that wonderful chapter on India which is the concluding volume of the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl in which not only is there a very detailed study of India's religious thought and customs and laws but also the concept of India as a unit of culture of which not only are the Hindus and Jains and Buddhists a part but Muslims are equally a part.

There is a part of it devoted to Muslims also. This is the first realisation that Indian culture is a composite culture. You see the culture as a whole. On the other hand there is also the proclamation of reason, of rationalism, rejection of superstition. In a declaration in the last volume of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, where he explains why the Indian culture has not been studied by Muslims, Abul Fazl says that 'I don't because I am an Indian and I am not interested in it, but because it should be in the nature of man to enquire. Why should one just accept the facts as they have been handed over to us from previous generations? One should enquire, one should find out, one should ask questions?' And therefore in Akbar's court there was an immense glorification of reason, of rationalism, and therefore a renewed interest in science and technology.

I think one of the tragedies of our civilisation, of our culture, is probably not that this immense effort failed but that in spite of its immense boldness I wonder how many political leaders today can make the kind of political statements in favour of tolerance, in favour of national unity being supreme over religious laws. Akbar could say that

Muslim daughters should inherit the same share as their brothers. I wonder how many ministers today would be able to make that statement. Akbar could say that in the Hindu attitude towards women there is male chauvinism. He says: 'What is the glory of the male if the male thinks that only by his wife undergoing suffering he would get salvation.'

How many people would be able to make these kinds of statements today. So, while undoubtedly it had limitations, it was an elitist statement, its turning to science and culture were limited, it could not adopt western science and technology, it did not know of the Copernican revolution although its astronomy and geography were totally Ptolemaic—all these limitations were there, but still I think it was an important heritage in Indian culture.

If one is trying to see the great things in India's past to build up some self confidence when one tries to build a nation, an independent nation of India, a politically and economically viable nation, a nation not rushing to the World Bank and the U.S. at every exchange crisis—if we are trying to build up a nation then we should have a proper concept of both the frailties, the weaknesses and the defects of our past culture which are very numerous, but also the achievements of that culture, the achievements of those people who challenged some of the essential particulars, some of the basic premises and superstitions of the culture and traditions of which, unfortunately, we are heirs. Let us then freely and without inhibition celebrate those figures.

## *Akbar in Pakistani Textbooks*

It was in 1960s that under the new educational policy prepared by the American experts, the subject of history was discontinued from the school curriculum and replaced by Social Studies: a mixture of history, politics, economics and geography. Later on, the process of Islamisation transformed the subject of Social Studies into a propaganda of state ideology. Students are supplied classified information and only such parts of the history of the sub-continent are selected which prove the theory of Two-Nation and refute the existence of composite Indian culture. As Akbar does not fit in this framework; he is conveniently ignored and not mentioned in any school textbook from class one to matriculation.

On the other hand, Aurangzeb appears in different textbooks of Social Studies and Urdu language as an orthodox and pious Muslim copying the Holy Quran and sewing caps for his livelihood.

As the school textbooks are planned and prepared by the central and provincial Textbook Boards, all schools, private as well as government are bound to teach students these textbooks. And, this compels students to read only prescribed textbooks to pass their examination. The result is that those students, who study only upto matriculation do not find a single line about Akbar in their textbooks and therefore have no idea of the Mughal rule in India.

In the 1970s, the subject of Pakistan Studies was introduced at primary, secondary and university levels in order to make young generation conscious of the genesis of Pakistan. In the textbooks of Pakistan Studies Akbar is not mentioned directly but indirectly as a rival of Ahmad Sarhandi (d. 1624), who is projected as a hero challenging Akbar's religious policy and restoring Islamic values in India. Here I quote a paragraph from a textbook to give you an idea:

(Ahmad Sarhandi) a great Muslim saint and scholar who challenged the might of Akbar to revive and re-establish the glory of Islam in the Sub-Continent. The Mughal Emperor had introduced a religious philosophy known as Din-e-Ilahi. It was an ill fated

---

\* Pakistan



attempt of Akbar to combine the salient features of Islam with Hinduism . . . He (Ahmad Sarhandi) came out with full vigour and vitality to curb the influence of Din-e-Ilahi, whose sole purpose was the distortion of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

The author further writes:

The movement launched by Hazrat Mujadid for the revival of Islam in India laid a foundation for the emergence of Two-Nation theory, which played the pivotal role in the creation of Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

To prove Ahmad Sarhandi as a founder of the Two-Nation theory and saviour of Islam, Akbar's image is distorted; and he is condemned as anti-Islam. The contrast between the two personalities appears, a conflict between evil and good and Akbar suffers a humiliating defeat at the hands of textbook historians.

History of the Sultanate and the Mughal Rule is taught at college and university level. Although there are no official prescribed textbooks, the majority of authors follow the State Doctrine and interpret the history accordingly. The attitude of these textbook historians is ambivalent. On one hand, they praise Akbar as conqueror and administrator, on the other hand, he is condemned on his Religious Policy and his tolerance towards the Hindus. The arguments to accuse Akbar and not Aurangzeb for the downfall of the Mughals are derived from I. H. Quershi who vehemently criticizes Akbar's incorporation of the non-Muslims in the Mughal Empire:

The most obvious reason was that Akbar had changed the nature of the polity profoundly. The Muslims were still the dominant group in the State, but it had ceased to be a Muslim State . . . he was no more as dependent upon their support as other Sultans had been. Now Muslims were only one of the Communities in the empire which controlled the Councils and the armed might of the State; . . . Akbar had so weakened Islam through his policies that it could not be restored to its dominant position in the affairs of the State.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the authors either quoted this statement in textbooks or carried out the same arguments in criticizing Akbar and his policy towards the Hindus. However in the *Tarikh-i-Pakistan-wa-Hind*, Shaikh Muhammad Rafiq gives two aspects of Akbar's Rajput policy.<sup>4</sup>

He writes:

There were negative effects of the Rajput policy. He favoured the Rajput so much so that his nobles had lost confidence in him. They regarded the Mughal rule no more Islamic. Mujadid Alif Sani and his disciples struggled to change this policy.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the author argues that the Rajput gained prominence under the Mughal rule. Had Raja Man Singh and Bhagwan

Das not joined Akbar, they would have passed un-noticed in the history. Their relation with the Muslims proved beneficial to them as the Muslims were highly cultured and refined people. Therefore, these relations liberated the Rajputs from their backwardness.<sup>6</sup>

And, on these results some of the authors lament:

That the political awareness; experience in warfare and competency to handle administrative matters, later on, converted the collaborators into formidable foes.

In the words of I.H. Qureshi:

In the beginning they saw with satisfaction and even pride that the Hindu had started "wielding the Sword of Islam", they soon learnt that the Sword would not always be wielded in the interest of Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Shaikh A. Rashid in *A Short History of Pakistan* written by eminent historians under the auspice of government, after analysing Akbar's policies writes:

And in the final analysis, if the Muslims were to forget their uniqueness and come to absorb, as Akbar did, contradictory tendencies and beliefs from other religions, could the Muslim nation continue to exist as a separate entity? Akbar's policies created dangers not only for the Muslim Empire but also for the continued existence of the Muslim nation in the Sub-Continent.<sup>8</sup>

The same arguments are repeated in different textbooks. For example, Muhammad Saeed Chaudhary in the *Tarikh-i-Pak-wa-Hind* published by Azim Academy Lahore (n.d.) criticizes Akbar's religious policy. He writes:

The only way to save the Kingdom was to strengthen the Muslims, because they were the backbone of the Mughal Rule. Like others, Akbar also failed to create one Indian Nation.<sup>9</sup>

M. Abdullah Malik, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Pak-wa-Hind*, after paying tribute to Akbar's military victories and administrative reforms, gives his judgement:

According to the Islamic point of view, Akbar's Rajput policy was not correct. This stopped the spread of Islam.<sup>10</sup>

Muhammad Raza Khan, the author of the *Tarikh-i-Musalmanan-i-Alam*, writes:

The result of his Rajput policy was that the Rajputs, after becoming members of the royal family, involved in intrigues and made attempts to usurp power by supporting their favourite candidates for throne. This created anarchy in the country.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in the textbooks as well as in academic works, Akbar is criticized for bringing Muslims and Hindus together as one nation and putting the separate identity of the Muslims in danger. This policy of Akbar contradicts the theory of Two-Nation and therefore makes him an unpopular figure in Pakistan.

In a society where there is no tolerance; where the religious minorities are treated as second rate citizens; where sectarianism is patronized by the state, where the clerics have assumed unlimited power to declare anybody liable to death; where the liberals and secular minded people are haunted by the State and fundamentalist groups; where books containing enlightened ideas are banned and burnt; and where intellectuals are not free to express their views; Akbar, who is a symbol of tolerance, enlightenment, secularism and liberalism, has no place in such a society.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. M. Ikram Rabbani: *An Introduction to Pakistan Studies*. Lahore, 1991, pp. 22,23.
2. Ibid., p. 23.
3. I.H. Qureshi: *The Muslim Community of the Indian Sub-Continent*. The Hague, 1962, pp. 167, 68.
4. Shaikh Muhammad Rafiq et al: *Tarikh-i-Pakistan-wa-Hind*. Lahore, 1992, p. 115
5. Ibid; p. 115.
6. Ibid, p. 114.
7. I.H. Qureshi: p. 167. Same views are expressed by Sh. A. Rashid in *A Short History of Pakistan*. Book Three: The Mughal Empire, Karachi 1967 reprinted 1988 p. 403.
8. Ibid; pp. 67, 68.
9. Muhammad Saeed Chaudhary: *Tarikh-i-Pak-wa-Hind*, Azim Academy Lah (n.d.) p. 276
10. M. Abdullah Malik: *Tarikh-i- Pak-wa-Hind*. Lahore 1972, p. 320.
11. M. Raza Khan: *Tarikh-i-Musalmanan-i-Alam*. Lahore, 1985. p. 714.

## *Agrarian Structure, Contradiction and Mobilization: A Framework for the Analysis of Emerging Rural Power*

### I

Agrarian mobilizations are a persistent phenomena of the Indian rural social system being manifested in different parts of the country over a long period of time (Gough 1974; Iyer and Maharaj 1977; Mukherji 1978; Desai 1979; Hardiman 1981; Sen 1982; Balgopal 1982; Das 1982; Sengupta 1982; Gill and Singhal 1984; Dhanagare 1983; Guha 1983; Sahasrabudhey 1986). The portrayal of Indian peasantry as fatalistic, docile, unresisting, superstitious and passive (Barrington Moore Jr., 1966) has been proved to be without much foundation (Desai, 1979; Gough, 1979). During the British period, the Indian rural scene bristled with large scale protests, revolts and militant struggles by the peasantry involving several hundreds of villages and lasting for years together. Peasants conducted a relentless struggle against feudal oppression and played a significant role in the freedom movement (Kumar 1979; Bhalla 1983; Mehta 1984 etc.). Large scale agrarian mobilizations continue to surface at present times and have acquired varied organisational identities. Political parties, *Sabhas*, *Sanghas*, *Sanganthanas* and *Unions* have become the organisational expressions of the contemporary agrarian unrests and mobilizations. What do these organisations and parties project? To our mind, they serve a two-fold purpose:

(i) they identify the existing structure(s) of power towards which their conflict is directed; and (ii) they project a new loci of power (pressure groups) in the regional and/or national political scene.

In this paper we note that the agrarian mobilisations and movements taking place are of different kinds. These can then be related to the changes taking place in the agrarian system. A conceptualisation of the feudalistic and capitalistic agrarian system, proposing a framework for the analysis of agrarian change is undertaken. We argue that the major agrarian mobilisations taking

\* Professor of Sociology, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi Centre

\*\* Faculty, I.S.I., Delhi Centre, 7, S.J.S. Sansanwal Marg, New Delhi 110 016

place arise out of the contradictions embedded in these agrarian systems. And finally, we attempt a resolution of the conflicting interpretations of the class and ethnic dimensions of mobilisations.

## II

The phenomena of agrarian mobilization in contemporary times present a far from uniform pattern. On the one hand we have movements such as in the 'flaming fields of Bihar' and the 'Peoples' War' phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, large scale mobilizations of the so-called farmers' movements are taking place in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab (Nadkarni 1987). These movements have different objectives, goals, strategies, vastly different ideologies and nature of leadership. It is not surprising that movements of the Bihar and Andhra types are not taking place in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab, and vice versa. A question such as, 'Why does not Sharad Joshi<sup>1</sup> take up the cause of agrarian problems in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh?'—is as redundant as the question, 'Why does Kanu Sanyal<sup>2</sup> not take up the cause of agrarian problems in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab'. For, these two varieties of mobilizations arise out of different agrarian contexts and perceptions of contradictions. The fact is that the agrarian context in Bihar and those of Maharashtra or Punjab are not quite the same. Therefore, one cannot expect the militants of one side to swap places with the activists of the other. A Kanu Sanyal or Vinod Mishra (Naxalites) cannot change positions with a Sharad Joshi (Shetkari Sangathana) or a Bhupinder Singh Mann [Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU)]. It can be stated,

- (a) that the agrarian context has been changing in India;
- (b) that the change is far from even; and
- (c) that agrarian mobilization arise out of the contradictions embedded in these contexts.

It can be observed that through the period of British colonialism upto present times there has been a certain continuity, particularly in the more backward states of India, where the agrarian system still continue to be 'feudalistic'. In contrast, the green revolution belts are witnessing monetisation of their agrarian economy. This system is becoming 'capitalistic'. By and large the former context has given rise to anti-feudal struggles by peasants and agricultural labourers, and the latter, the so-called new phenomenon of farmers' movements. The anti-feudal struggles indicate the presence of entrenched feudal power structures on the one hand and the emergence of a new locus of rural power in conflict with it seeking a change of the agrarian system. The

farmers' movements demonstrate the consolidation of rural power in the hands of more well-to-do farmers who are different from the feudal landlords. It is therefore necessary to analytically distinguish between the feudalistic and the capitalistic agrarian systems, in order to assess the nature and quality of agrarian change and the changing contradictions which have given rise to the agrarian movements in the present times.

### III

The main structural features of the feudalistic agrarian system are the following:

- (a) the existence of a landed class with substantial landholdings, for whom the principal source of income is from land given in *rent* to *tenants*. This is the rentier-class of *landlords* who could be resident or absentee depending upon where they normally resided. In addition to income through rent, the landlord class is often associated with earning through *usury*;
- (b) the system is pervaded by the phenomenon of '*attachment*'. Thus, there are attached labourers, bonded labourers and tenants, who are '*tied*' to the landlord generally through (i) usury (consumption loans), (ii) homestead and/or land allotment for personal residence/cultivation (of the attached labourer). These in many cases, result in the phenomenon of debt bondage, often running into generations of inextricable servitude (Patnaik and Dingwaney 1985);
- (c) such ties generally demand unrestricted utilisation of time, *unpaid labour* involving customary non-legal exactions, and sometimes even claims over women of attached labourers and tenants for sexual gratification;
- (d) inter-personal behaviour between the landlord and the class categories to which he is related is characterised by diffuse non-economic obligations guided by respect and deference to his status;
- (e) the system is based on the model of a '*patron*'-landlord exploiting the other agrarian '*claint*' categories;
- (f) the decision regarding crop(s) to be grown by tenant vests with the landlord.

The *zamindari* system under the British colonial dispensation was the archetype of the feudalistic agrarian system, all the peasant classes were related to the landlord class as tenants. With the abolition of *zamindari* (and introduction of ceiling on land) the occupancy tenants were freed from the nexus of the landlord-tenant relationships. They acquired independent peasant status. However, the landlord class or the element of landlordism in the peasantry has continued to survive in the form of income through rent from land

leased-out to tenants for cultivation, and through usury. As a result, attachment and bondage continue to be features of the changing feudalistic agrarian system even at the present times.

The peasant class was earlier identified with the self-cultivating, subsistence, small farmer cultivating household (Shanin, 1971: 238-245). But now the generally accepted view is that the peasantry is differentiated into rich, middle and poor peasant classes<sup>3</sup>.

In comparison, the capitalistic agrarian system is characterised by the following features:

- (a) here the cultivator is the *farmer* and the land which he owns and/or controls constitutes his *farm*;
- (b) he makes his *decisions* regarding what to grow and in how much of his area;
- (c) this decision is based on the *profit* criterion taking into account the prevailing and projected *market prices* of different crops;
- (d) accordingly he makes judicious *investments* in implements and inputs;
- (e) here the market is completely *monetised* and all services and inputs have to be purchased in the money market. The farmer is forced to compute *his cost of cultivation*;
- (f) there is an element of *risk* in such investments, hence the farmer calculates the amount of *risk taking* and *risk averting*, he is going to do.

In the capitalistic system the farmer is unlikely to lease-out land to tenants, for he would much rather grow his own crops on his land. If he leases-out land it is to share the risk rather than make his earning through rent (Minhas, 1990). The tenancy structure in this system is qualitatively different from what obtains in the feudalistic system. He is more likely to utilise his family labour and/or employ casual wage labour and/or engage monthly farm employee or even, annual farm servant under his direct supervision or supervisory arrangement. He is unlikely to be 'tied' to other agrarian categories as in the model of exploitation and patronage. Instead, he acquires membership in secular economic interest-groups and develops '*associational ties*'. If he leases-in land, which could involve large areas, this is likely to be on a money rent contract in which he exercises his own decision making rights. In short, in an important sense the farmer is 'free' to pursue his investments and crop choice unrestricted by 'obligations' to other agrarian categories. The relationships in the simplest form acquires a two tier system of the farmer and the farm labour. Its further elaboration would mean the introduction of supervisory/managerial staff under the employment of the farmer.

It is being suggested that the landlord-peasant-tenant-labour configuration of agrarian relations, characterised by diffuse ties of customary obligations is 'feudalistic' in structure. In comparison, the

farmer-farm labour-under-supervision, characterised by contractual terms and conditions is 'capitalistic' in structure. The big farmers in the Marxist terminology are the enterprising rural bourgeoisie or the *kulaks*. Unfortunately, the native term *kisan* disguises the distinction between the 'peasant' and the 'farmer', and hence tends to blur the change processes in the agrarian society. A 'peasant-kisan' may over a period of time get transformed into a 'farmer-kisan'. It will be clear that a landowner will be identified as 'feudal' or 'capitalist' depending upon the system of production in which he operates.

This rather simplistic typification of the 'feudal' and the 'capitalistic' agrarian systems is only meant to serve as a *heuristic* device to give us some idea about the nature of a given agrarian system and the kind of change it is undergoing. These concepts should not be considered as reificatory. In any given concrete agrarian context the elements of both the systems could coexist giving expression to new social formations. The important thing to note is that the erstwhile landlord dominated economy characterized by rent and usury, based on loyalty and dependence to a patriarchal authority which could be tyrannical and oppressive in the extreme or benevolent and enlightened, is undergoing significant changes ever since the abolition of zamindari and other forms of landlordism imposed or generated by colonialists.

#### IV

That the typology of the 'feudalistic' and 'capitalistic' agrarian systems can at best be accepted heuristically is amply demonstrated by our discovery of bonded labour in the green revolution belts of Karnal and Panipat. The features of this system as we have come to understand through our limited field experience is as follows.

- (1) the labour takes a heavy consumption loan (for marriage, etc.) of say Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000;
- (2) the condition of the loan is that he has to serve as the 'annual farm servant' of this creditor-landlord;
- (3) the annual remuneration is fixed at Rs. 3000 or so, which is less than what he owes to the creditor-landlord, which is capital plus interest @ 2 per cent per month;
- (4) the labourer therefore, receives no wages in hand, they all stand pre-adjusted;
- (5) he is given meals or its equivalent in grains, daily;
- (6) he is given firewood and other tit-bits free of cost;
- (7) he may be given a buffalo calf to tend, with fodder provided by the master, which when it reaches the milching stage is sold at a high premium—the price which it fetches is supposed to be split 50-50;



- (8) whatever other requirements of the labourer's family, like salt, pulses, sugar, etc. can be obtained from a specified shop on the master's account, which when cleared by him enters the 'khata' or debt account ledger of the labourer;
- (9) when the labourer family indulges in some ceremonial revelry, or has to play host to his kins, the expenses including that of drinks and other items enter the *khata*;
- (10) the labourer is provided with clothes, petty medical assistance, etc, but his wife's and family's requirements enter the *khata*;
- (11) each day's absence entails entry of a day's market wage in the *khata*;
- (12) if the labourer has to marry his son or daughter, loans upto Rs. 5000 are advanced, this too swells the figures in the *khata*;
- (13) at the end of the 'annual contract', he is left with a massive debt, which again compels him to enter into another annual contract and so the never-ending cycle continues.

The labourer, in return, is usually at the tube-well pump house day and night. The major task is to irrigate and keep watch. He has to operate the pump. When water fills up in one plot he has to divert it to the next. There are specific timings for watering which have to be maintained. For this kind of job, casual labour is not suited. Nor are salaried servants available for such tedious round-the-clock tasks. This posting at the tube well is the most critical of all the other jobs, as in proper and timely irrigation lies the success of a crop. The grip of the master on the servant is therefore fiercely strong.

In Karnal-Panipat, two variants of such bondage were found. One was the classic *long term generational bondage*, in which one bond master and his kins (who are also landlords) between themselves, draw into bondage other members of an already bonded family. As the sons of the bonded father grow up, get married through fresh debt-bondage, they enter the rank of their father, into the extended family of the master of their father. That is one bond master, unable or unwilling to keep more than a specified number of labourers in bondage, reproduces new labourers for supply as bonded labourers through debt bondage for their 'needy' landlord kins. This case was associated with a wealthy non-cultivating, upper caste landlord extended family.

The other form was in the nature of *serial bondage*. The labourer enters into debt-bondage. He is unable to clear his debt. Another landlord requires a tube well posting. He approaches the bonded labourer. Offers him slightly better terms. The bonded labourer agrees to work for him. The new bond master clears his debts with the old bond master. The labourer resumes his bonded existence in a new setting. Such parallel mobility in bondage was found to be quite prevalent in the Panipat areas, amongst Sikh employers. There is

some kind of a market in trading of bonded labour, as bonded labourers prefer to move from one bond master to the other with marginally better wages and conditions of work, in an effort to reduce the debt gap. In Panipat also, as in Karnal, we found a similar pattern of successive induction of male adult members of the family into bondedness. The conditions of work for the bonded labourer in Panipat is similar to those in Karnal.

The debt-bondage phenomenon in Karnal and Panipat is far from a feudal appendage. This structure is consistent with a capitalistic agrarian system, in which considerations of profit maximisation through investment and cost-effectiveness provide the rationality of a system. The farmer *invests* in the labour through advance of unrepayable loans. He provides for him sufficiently to exist at a satisfactory level of subsistence. He pitches the loans upto around Rs. 10,000 which is unrepayable. This is cost-effective considering the amount of labour he extracts out of him.

## V

It has been already observed that the nature and variety of agrarian mobilizations are essentially related to the changing agrarian situations that give rise to them. Generally speaking the agrarian mobilizations we witness today fall in one or the other of the following categories:

- (a) those arising out of the contradictions embedded in the feudalistic structures of the agrarian society;
- (b) those arising out of the contradictions emerging from the capitalistic penetration in agriculture.

In the former situation, the major contradictions can be located *within* the feudalistic agrarian system, and in the latter this is to be found as between the agrarian and the urban-industrial systems. Thus, movements relating to security of the tenancy cultivation, against unfair crop share and usury, against bonded labour etc. are principally anti-feudal struggles. In contrast, movements directed towards reduction or abolition of electricity charges, water charges, agricultural taxes, waiver and deferral of institutional loans, reduction in the input charges, demand for remunerative prices etc. define the complexion of the farmer's movements in the agrarian belts which have witnessed capitalistic penetration (Nadkarni 1987).

It is in this context that the emergence of new loci of power has to be understood in the feudalistic and capitalistic systems. The emergence of several groups in the Jharkhand belt,<sup>4</sup> the dozen or more groups of naxalite persuasion in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, parties such as the Indian Peoples' Front, and non-party organisations like the Chatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini,<sup>5</sup> and many more voluntary organisations and

groups, indicate the growing political ferment at the grass roots of the feudalistic agrarian systems. Correspondingly farmers' organisations such as BKU,<sup>6</sup> Farmers' Federation of India etc. demonstrate the resurgence of organised rural power in the areas of capitalist market penetration. In the former situation, caste, class and ethnic contradictions are sharpened and the conflicts are expected to overcome and resolve these contradictions. In the latter, the whole rural community is sought to be homogenised ideologically, projecting the main source of all rural ills as emanating from the exploitative nexus between the urban and the rural, between the state and the rural masses.

It is not infrequent that a 'given movement' is interpreted by some as a class movement and by others as ethnic. For example most caste and tribal oriented movements in the rural areas have been subjected to such conflicting interpretations. This source of confusion needs to be examined and resolved.

It is proposed that any social system is constituted of the structures of discrimination, exploitation and oppression in their inter-relationships (Mukherji 1987, 1609). Each of these are structures of asymmetrical relationships which give rise to contradictions. Whether a conflict of scale is basically ethnic or class in character depends upon whether the primary contradiction is located in the asymmetrical structure of discrimination or exploitation (or both). But no matter whether the primary contradiction is located in the structure of discrimination or exploitation, it is most likely to have an interface with the other. Thus, in the Naxalbari movement, for instance, the predominant militant participation of the Santhals, Oraons and Mundas, did not mean that the movement was of ethnic orientation. This is because these communities were responding to the contradictions in the agrarian structure of exploitation as peasants (P. 1613-14). Nevertheless, this class response to an asymmetrical structure of exploitation had an unmistakable ethnic interface. Likewise in the Gorkhaland movement, the main contradiction hinged on the discrimination against the Nepalese in the matter of their citizenship, questioning their basic identity (Mukherji, 1989). Thus, this movement was basically an ethnic movement. However during the course of the movement the economic exploitation suffered by the Nepalese community also became a vigorous part of the movement campaign.

It is not necessary that the primary contradictions giving rise to conflict will continue to persist in the same structure of asymmetry. The primary contradiction can oscillate between different structures of asymmetries. Thus, for instance, in the Darjeeling Hills during the Gorkhaland movement there was an almost wholesale shift of CITU members in the tea plantations to the Gorkha National Liberation Front. This did not make them class unconscious, rather they were

responding to the primary contradiction located in the structure of discrimination where the question of Nepalese identity had acquired predominance over the issues of class exploitation (P. 19). Subsequent to the resolution of the ethnic contradiction, class issues could regain their original significance.

It is within this framework that, an alternative analysis of the emergence or organised peasant power in the rural areas can be attempted.

#### NOTES

1. A prominent leader of farmers' movement
2. A prominent leader of the peasant and agricultural labour movement.
3. The class differentiation among the peasantry is made on the basis of two important criteria; (a) the extent of land owned and (b) use of family labour to cultivation. The *rich peasant* household is one which possesses land in excess of what is possible for it to exploit fully through its own family labour and may lease-out its excess land to tenants much like the landlord household. In contrast, the *middle peasant* is a self cultivating household which cultivates its lands almost entirely with the help of family labour and employing casual wage labour only during brief peak seasons of harvesting or transplanting. It is left with little or no surplus. The *poor peasant* household is left with excess labour power, which it either sells, or it leases-in land from a landlord or a rich peasant. Production from its own lands being in deficit of its household consumption requirements, it has to participate in the tenancy or the labour market or both. A poor peasant can also be a landless tenant cultivator-cum agricultural labourer (See Patnaik 1976; Bardhan 1979; Rudra 1978).
4. In a conference convened by Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) during the beginning of 1990 under the leadership of Dr. B.P. Keshri, Head of the Department of Tribal and Regional Language in Ranchi University, as many as 48 organisations and groups including the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, All Jharkhand Party, Indian Peoples' Front etc. attended.
5. The Chatra Yuva Sangarsh Vahini was established by Jayaprakash Narayan who in his last years gave a call for Total Revolution in India (1974). The Vahini was established as a non-party political youth vanguard of the movement practising satyagraha as a form of militant nonviolence (See Mukherji 1989).
6. Bhartiya Kisan Union is emerging as the national front for the various regional farmer's associations such as the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, Shetkari Sangathana (Maharashtra), Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha, Punjab Khetibari Zamindar Union and so on (the last has merged with the BKU).

#### REFERENCES

- Balgopal, K. 'Peasant Struggle and Repression in Peddapally', *EPW*, Vol. 17 (2), 1982, pp. 814-16.
- Bardhan, Pranab, 'On Class Relations in Indian Agriculture' *EPW*, XIV (19), 1979, pp. 857-60.
- Bhalla, G.S., 'Peasant Movement and Agrarian Change in India', *Social Scientist*, Vol 11 (8), 1983, pp. 39-57

- Das, A.N., *Agrarian Movements in India: Studies on Twentieth Century Bihar*, London, Frank Cass, 1982.
- Desai, A.R., *Peasant Struggles in India* (eds.), Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Dhanagare, D.N., *Peasant Movements in India 1920-1950*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Gill, S.S. and K.C. Singhal, 'Farmers' Agitation—Response to Development Crisis of Agriculture', *EPW*, Vol 19 (40), 1984, pp. 1728-32.
- Gough, Kathleen, 'Peasant Uprisings', *EPW*, Vol 9, (Spl. No.), August, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Indian Peasant Uprisings' in A.R. Desai (ed.), op.cit. pp. 85-128.
- Guha, Ranjit, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Hardiman, David, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917-34*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Iyer, K.G. and R.N. Maharaj, *Agrarian Movement in Dhanbad*, Delhi, NLI 1977.
- Kumar, S., *Peasantry and the Indian National Movement, 1919-1933*, Meerut, Annu Prakashan, 1974.
- Mehta, S., *The Peasantry and Nationalism: A Study of the Bardoli Satyagraha*, Delhi, Monohar, 1984.
- Minhas, B.S., *Economic Policies as Incentive Mechanism to Achieve Agricultural Production and Income Goals* (Unpublished paper), 1989.
- Moore Barrington Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Beacon Press, 1966.
- Mukherji, Partha N., 'Naxalbari Movement and the Peasant Revolt in North Bengal', in M.S. Rao (ed.) *Social Movements in India*, Vol. 1, Delhi, Manohar 1978, pp. 17-90.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Study of Social Conflicts: Case of Naxalbari peasant Movement', *EPW*, September 19, 1987, pp. 1607-1617.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Class and Ethnic Movements: Democracy and National Building in India' paper presented in the AKUT Conference on 'When does Democracy make Sense? Political Economy and Political Rights in Third World with some European Comparisons', Uppsala, Sweden, 26-28 Oct. 1989 (unpublished).
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Interim Report of the Study Group on Social Constraints on Rural Labour*, Submitted to National Commission on Rural Labour, Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India 1991.
- Nadkarni, M.V., *Farmers' Movements in India*, Ahmedabad, Allied Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1987.
- Patnaik, Utsa, 'Class Differentiation within the Peasantry: An Approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture' *EPW*, XI, 39, (Review of Agriculture), 1976, pp. 82-101.
- Patnaik, Utsa and Dingwaney Manjori, *Chains of Servitude : Bondage and Slavery in India*, Madras, Sangam Books (India), Pvt. Ltd., 1985.
- Report from Flaming Fields of Bihar*, A CPI (ML) Document, Calcutta 1986.
- Rudra, Ashok, 'Class Relations in Indian Agriculture' *EPW*, XII (1978 abc) pp. 22-24; 916-23; 963-66 and 998-1003.
- Sahasrabudhey, Sunil, *The Peasant Movement Today* (ed.), Delhi, Ashish Publishing House, 1986.
- Sen, Sunil, *Peasant Movements in India: Mid-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Calcutta, Bagchi and Co., 1982.
- Sengupta, N., 'Agrarian Movements in Bihar' *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 9 (3), 1982 pp. 15-39.
- Shanin, Teodor, 'Peasantry as a Political Factor' in Shanin (ed.) *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 238-63.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Resettlement Issue in Ecological Politics*

Enakshi Ganguly Thukral (ed.), 1992, *Big Dams, Displaced People: Rivers of Sorrow Rivers of Change*, Sage Publishers, pp. 199, price Rs 120 (hb.)

Ecological politics and the struggle for resources have begun to be increasingly recognised as new social movements attempting to question the status quo and its resource-use pattern. The late seventies and the early eighties witnessed ecologists concerned largely with forestry related issues, while the late eighties and the nineties has found them preoccupied with large dams. The recent interest in the Narmada and the Tehri dams and their social costs has led to a surge of movements against all large scale irrigation projects being planned and implemented in the country. It has also begun to concern a lot of academicians and social activists resulting in the production of critical works on large dams.

While the anti-dam struggles are supposedly ecological movements, interestingly, the resettlement issue forms their backbone. It is not clear whether this thrust is due to the ecological movement trying to come to terms with itself as a result of consistent left attacks on it, or whether it finds it easier to mobilise the oustees to form its social base, as against the 'unaffected' populace or the middle class on broadly environmental slogans. This has led a few observers to wonder if these are ecological movements or merely resettlement ones. The point that is missed is that ecological issues cannot be discussed with reference to only the birds and the bees. Human beings and their social and material interaction is what forms the basis of ecological and social history. Thus ecological impact too has to be judged and measured in relation to the use or abuse of the transformation of the resource base.

It is in this context that the book under review is making an important contribution. The book, which the editor professes is about resettlement, has in fact a wider range. Perhaps this is only natural as resettlement of the oustees cannot be examined outside the changes in the production process. The production process, which encompasses the technology of large dams, social relations, and ecological changes is also referred to and examined in some detail. However, as pointed out

by the editor, it is on the resettlement aspect that the most interesting insights and an empirically rich analysis based on extensive field researches is provided.

By what seems to be a pre-determined format, case studies have been conducted on the Hirakud, Nagarjunsagar, Ukai and Pong dams. Though not mentioned, it is pertinent to point out that all these dams are *large* dams; medium and small are other categories of measurement based on the irrigated area. The choice of these four dams is stated to be due to their location in what the editor calls the 'four geographical zones'. One wonders since when the four zones (East, West, North and South) can be equated with *geographical* ones, which depend not on the division of the country, but on the *geographical* characteristics. In case the ill-informed reviewer has mistook the geographical zones to be the directional ones, it is due to the absence of finer geographical details in the book like arid or semi-arid or such standard terminology which is used to describe the location of irrigation projects. Similarly the selection of dams could have been done on the basis of the location of the headworks—nearer to the source or in the hills, in the plains or further down the plains. If such a classification could have been provided, then the reader could even envisage alternatives to large dams.

The absence of such finer details points to the neglect of the technical and economic aspects of the dam, which ostensibly was not the project of the study, merely the plight of displacement was. However, the economic, technical and other social aspects are referred to when it is convenient to buttress the argument against displacement. This confuses the reader—if displacement is to be examined outside the ambit of the broader socio-economic impact of dams, then can it be called a movement, other than a resettlement one? With this methodological approach, we find a rich analysis of the impact of displacement and a very weak section on the critical analysis of dams, to the extent of indicating a prejudicial understanding that all dams, at all times and all locations are undesirable.

The dams under study are all post-independent, spanning the period from the late forties to the seventies. This broad time span could have been utilised by the study to compare changes in planning and modes of protest in three different time periods (late forties; fifties; and the sixties). This could have brought out the emergence and crystallization of the green movement against dams in the eighties. However, the finer details of the different time periods have not been alluded to, and the case studies have been conducted with a fixed notion of time and the value judgement of the eighties.

It is only fair to make these preliminary methodological comments, for though this book is a collection of essays, it has a collective purpose. It has emerged out of the project undertaken by MARG (Multiple Action Research Group), with a centralised planning,

coordination and processing. All the four case studies—Hirakud (Philip Viegas), Nagarjunsagar (Mridula Singh & Ranjan K. Samantray), Ukai (Kashyap Mankodi) and Pong (Renu Bhanot & Mridula Singh) provide an insight on the 'other side of development'. The plight of the oustees becomes apparent when one sees the callousness of the officials, state indifference, corruption, lack of information and participation, archaic resettlement laws and inordinately long judicial processes, inadequate compensation, unfamiliar and poor resettlement sites, etc. all these trap the oustees into a life of impoverishment and often of ghettoization. This process has been captured very well by the authors and written sensitively. This book should be a must for not only all planners and implementers of resettlement programmes of any large scale project, but also to the designers of large dams who should realise also the human misery they create.

The complexity of the resettlement issue is such that perhaps a paltry 199 pages cannot do justice to it. This is a book which provides a foundation for further inquiry in the area. It is in this sense that the book seems incomplete, certain suggestions can be made towards further investigation. The advocates of the cause of landless oustees and the 'encroachers' need to get their act together. It is not enough to point to their total neglect, but an insistence must be placed that they be treated at par with the landed oustees. For they are a crucial link in the production process and as much a part of the economy, society and polity as the landowners. Mere access to land for claiming citizenship needs to be demolished. A sociological study of these 'encroachers' and landless oustees role in a submerged village and their subsequent plight in the resettlement programme should be made. There is a need to collect finer details of the composition of all the classes of the oustees and their envisaged resettlement. A further breakup of the oustees on the basis of their economic and socio-cultural role is essential. Tribals need to be distinguished as peasants, foragers and the like, and their resettlement needs to be done on these lines. 'Land for land' as a slogan is an incomplete one. What would an artisan, for instance, do with land and without the necessary resources for this or her skills. Further, partly submerged villages need not be dislocated, but integrated with the non-submerged part.

Enakshi Ganguly Thukral and Machindra D. Sakate have penned a case study on a people's initiated irrigation scheme—the Baliraja dam. This small dam has been planned and is being constructed by the local people in response to the pressing ecological problems of the area. It is an attempt at equitable distribution of water among the villagers, whether they have land or not. Along with equity, sustainability is a key concept being explored, e.g. water-intensive crops like sugarcane are banned. The spirit of Baliraja dam attempts to lay down certain basics towards the formation of a green society. However, our search



for-alternatives has to be geographic and location-specific and it needs to be examined whether tens or hundreds of Baliraja's can be made in any region, instead of one large dam.

It is interesting to find a chapter critically examining the rehabilitation laws and policies, pointing to the urgent need to keep pace with the times by outgrowing the colonial legacy. The structural limitations of the colonial and indeed, continuing resettlement policies, and the gross neglect of important components in a village economy are well highlighted. The suggestions put forward here by Kalpana Vaswani for an alternate policy need careful consideration by the future framers of such a policy.

An evaluation of major irrigation projects is a well written paper by Shekhar Singh, Ashish Kothari and Kulan Amin. It is a paper published earlier in the inaugural issue of 'Sustainable Development'. This paper, with the help of government records, particularly the Public Accounts Committee and the Comptroller and Auditor General's Report points to the structural and technical problems associated with large irrigation projects. It particularly points to the shortcomings of the cost-benefit method in evaluating the feasibility of a large dam. It suggests alternative way of evaluation, within the cost-benefit methodology. However, with the economical dimension gaining prominence in large scale projects, such a methodology would be on very slippery ground when it comes to providing an economic figure to the cost of ecological destruction.

In the concluding chapter, Vasudha Dhagamwar in her musings on a 'long long way from home', points to the necessity of education or 'modernity' which 'we' (read urban ecologically conscious middle class) have adopted for ourselves, while imposing 'tradition' on 'others'. She warns, 'because we have a need to preserve old cultures, let us not imprison others in them.' Further, she questions, 'is it possible to eradicate prejudices if we continue caste-based occupational patterns in the name of preserving old cultures?' She rightly points out that 'traditions' too have their dark areas and that 'modernity' does tend to eradicate traditional forms of exploitation. But it needs to be kept in mind that modernity also builds up its own system of control and has its own way of subjugation and dominance. Modern day capitalist relations and consumerism as also large dams, are after all, products of 'modern education'. And it is this modernity which is being questioned here—the modernity that deprives the people of their resources and livelihoods. If modernity had changed their lives for the better, in a sustainable way, then the critique of large dams would not have emerged.

An important link missing in this book is a critical examination of the agricultural sector and the inroads that the market and the state have made into it. The link that a large scale irrigation project

provides in this pursuit of control over the rural sector needs to be examined.

To conclude, one may point out that the book has largely been written by 'part-time activists' and therefore lacks academic rigour. It is full of logical inconsistencies, there is improper treatment of facts, a lack of a wholistic perspective and gross neglect of evolution, time and historical processes. The merit of the book lies in the fact that it attempts to highlight an important and contentious issue. In fact, the book is a pointer to the need for a serious academic inquiry into the issues these activists raise.

SATYAJIT SINGH  
Hindu College, Delhi University  
Delhi

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Household*

K. Saradamoni (ed.) *Finding the Household: Conceptual and Methodological Issues*, Sage 1992, pp. 251, Rs. 225

The fifth and last collection of papers presented at the Regional Conference for Asia on Women and the Household, held in June 1985, is perhaps the most interesting because it deals with the household as a unit of data collection and analysis. With K. Saradamoni as editor, the arguments are presented comprehensively, for both clarity and perspective, which are needed to ensure that the 'convenient' approach to the household as a unit is substituted by a *critical* view of the conception and use of the household in research and governmental surveys. The impact of this approach has already been felt in the census organisation and it is hoped that gender issues will as a consequence not remain invisible.

Household surveys are no recent phenomenon. According to Saradamoni, Mediterranean societies used them in Biblical times to identify the able bodied warrior and the tax payer. 'Family' also had a broader meaning than just a coresidential unit. Roman surveys included not just the warrior and the tax payer but also their possessions. With the end of slavery and the emergence of peasant agriculture we have the formation of household units in early medieval society. The purpose of this foray into early history is to emphasise that there is no 'universal' definition of the concept of the household, relevant for all times and at all places. For the researcher, particularly in Asia, this is a noteworthy caution, because it is assumed that where poverty and the struggle for survival are universal, social, cultural and religious parameters, methods of production, even the status of women must be the same. Thus concepts like household, family, head of the family, are better understood in the real life context so that vital information and detail regarding inter-household and intra-household relations are not missed, particularly by the policy maker. In the context of economic restructuring such methodological refinement will help to ensure that women are not ignored. Papers by Lardinois, Rao, Ralpagow, and Majumdar reveal the diversity in household formation (the joint family, nuclear family, matrilineal family etc.) and the role and

status of women. The different socio-economic groups surveyed also point to the diversity.

From Illo, Cho and Thi we have studies on the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam. Illo deals with the problem of headship and the limitation of identifying one head for all occasions and purposes. Cho takes on the difference between the 'official' and 'popular' understanding of household, family and status of women. Thi traces the impact of colonisation on the changing status of women. Here there is an attempt to pose the challenges of the new situation and the strength of tradition. The global character of the debate on women and the household is presented in the INSTRAW statement which notes the 'radical and far-reaching modifications' in social structures, family organisation, occupational patterns and social values affecting gender and age interaction. The purpose of this debate is to focus on women both in development and inter-natural co-operation. In relating the micro level to the macro level it is hoped to catch the changes in global trends, which are of significance not only to the planners but also to the beneficiaries.

NINA RAO

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Dialectic of 'Critique'*

Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

Tejaswini Niranjana is careful to deflect, both through the title of her book and by way of her introductory remarks, any expectation that her work might be a contribution to the 'poetics' (which informs the praxis) of translation; it is intended instead as a contribution to 'theory.' Theory however cannot swerve aside from praxis, or from the disciplinary formation (here 'translation studies') that regulates the 'knowledges' pertaining to a practice, but must instead engage with them through the dialectic of 'critique,' as Niranjana's book does at its best. Theory in effect emerges from such critique even as it is operative in it.

Niranjana makes two conceptual moves within this trajectory: one is to broaden the scope of 'translation' from its limited application to an 'interlingual process' to serve as a term for an entire problematic of language as it relates to 'representation, power, and historicity;' the second is to make the 'activity' of translation bear the weight of this problematic which has, along the way, taken on the baggage of political considerations as well (specifically, from the critique of colonial discourse). These two moves might uneasily resemble an elaborate detour since it could be argued that the *politics* of translation could be—and has been—addressed by more 'straightforward' (read: marxian, liberal-humanist) arguments. Nevertheless the fact remains—as a historical footnote if nothing else—that one strand of contemporary postcolonial critique has in fact been enabled, even made possible, by the coincidence of its political goals with the problematization of western metaphysics, of liberal humanism, and of historicism that 'theory' in the west has initiated—and the exploration of this coincidence (to endow it with the most trivialized explanation), even when it runs the danger of becoming an inflated academic gesture, is a necessary acknowledgement of historical necessity, or choice.

Towards the end of her book Niranjana concedes that 'under the sign of western liberalism, a certain kind of moral indignation has condemned colonial representations as simplistic and demanded 'better' representations in their place.' So has the nationalist/nativist discourse. But she argues not only that such questionings are not radical enough, implicated as they are within the conceptual model of history that the imperialist project valorized, but also that 'correct' political ends cannot be served by dubious strategic/methodological means. It is post structuralism's careful and patient unpicking—the *deconstruction*—of no less than the very structure of western metaphysics, that alone will serve the postcolonial critic's radical enterprise.

It is another matter that the post-structuralist philosophers that Niranjana discusses as the chief 'matter' of the book, Derrida and de Man, do not themselves address the issue of colonialism. This Niranjana adduces as a 'failure' of post-structuralism, one that inheres in its omission of *history*. To mark this failure Niranjana is obliged to distinguish between a good historicity and a bad history, or historicism; and the good history, under which Foucault, Althusser, Benjamin, and the Indian subalternists get somewhat indiscriminately lumped together, is nevertheless defined in a useful and precise way as 'effective history,' 'that part of the past that is still operative in the present,' that 'incorporates questions about how the translation/re-translation worked/works, why the text was/is translated, and who did/does the translating'—in other words, a *critical history*.

But it is equally important to ask how the 'lack' of history within the post-structuralist problematic ought to be theorized. Is it a *constitutive* lack, or is it, as Niranjana describes it, only a 'drawback' that may be compensated by 'adding' history to one's post-structuralist insights? Using Derrida's own concept of the 'supplement,' history could be brought to bear powerfully upon the philosophical structure of language and thought that post structuralism critiques; and the *defferral* of the question of history that Derrida, for instance, repeatedly enacts (in Niranjana's own showing) may be read as symptomatic. Niranjana offers Walter Benjamin at this point as an exemplary figure who has anticipated the current post-modernist critique of historicism without sacrificing the materialist concern with historicity. Her introduction to and exposition of Benjamin's work is a valuable contribution, since (in spite of Terry Eagleton's recent essays on him) Benjamin has been a relatively inaccessible figure for postcolonial academics in the field. But reading Benjamin *via* Derrida and de Man's essays on his work on 'The Task of the Translator,' as Niranjana does—in order both to point up their 'inadequacies,' as well as to align him with post-structuralism—leads to the tedium and clumsiness of expository regress (the critic reading de Man and Derrida reading Walter Benjamin).

Retaining the broad distinction between history and theory that Niranjana initiates we might judge the strengths of her own work to rest in her exposition of theory rather than in her historical analysis. Thus Chapter 1, 'History in Translation,' which elaborates the 'colonial connection,' somewhat mechanically associates the orientalist project of William Jones (chiefly his translations from the ancient Indian classics), with Hegel's world history, in which the Hindu was represented as 'cheating, stealing, robbing, murdering,' a subjectification that was carried over into James Mills' *History of British India* (1817) which in turn supplied the colonial administrator—Macaulay most notoriously—with the necessary pretext for the civilizing mission. The following chapter, which discusses translation studies as the discipline that authorizes and regulates the practice of translation, and ethnography as a study of 'other' cultures and societies that has recently begun to grow aware of the 'asymmetries implicit in its enterprise,' usefully draws the limits of these knowledges and their complicities with power. The three central chapters that follow discuss the speculations of de Man, Derrida and Benjamin on translation, hinging on Benjamin's essay on 'The Task of the Translator;' Niranjana goes beyond this essay to examine Benjamin's later work and the impingement of the former upon the latter, in order to argue his continuing engagement with the question of translation-in-history. Finally, in the last chapter, Niranjana triumphantly vindicates her argument through a comparative analysis of three different translations of a *vacana* (a poetic fragment) by the fifteenth-century Kannada poet, Allama.

Niranjana's long and nuanced essay in this chapter brings together her earlier observations and then presses beyond them to the most original—hence risky—enterprise that the book undertakes, viz. 'a translation of translations,' one that 'intervenes . . . to inscribe heterogeneity,' an activity not 'transformed' into a 'disruptive, disseminating' force. Isolating 'reading' as the exemplary act which serves as 'a model for the historian as well as for the translator' she argues the need for a 'critical, interventionist' posture:

The post-colonial desire to *re-translate* is linked to the desire to *re-write history*. . . To read existing translations against the grain is also to read colonial historiography from a post-colonial perspective, and a critic alert to the ruses of colonial discourse can help uncover what Walter Benjamin calls 'the second tradition,' the history of resistance. . . . The use of post-structuralism in the decolonizing world, although fraught with the anxieties and desires of representation, brings to legibility areas of contradiction, difference, and resistance (172–3).

Having thus cleared the ground Niranjana proceeds to analyse three post-colonial translations of Allama's *Vacana*. The first of these is by

S.C. Nandimath, L.M.A. Menezes, and R.C. Hiramath (Karnataka University Press, 1965); the second is taken from A.K. Ramanujam's much-admired anthology of Saivite devotional poetry, *Speaking of Siva* (Penguin, 1973); and the third is Niranjana's own rendering. Niranjana begins by contextualizing the poem within the history and the modes of its production. She then issues the following condemnation of the earlier translations for their failure 'to comprehend the economy of translation in this poem':

Attempting to assimilate Saivite poetry to the discourses of Christianity or of a post-Romantic New Criticism, these translators reproduce some of the nineteenth-century native responses to colonialism. Accepting the premises of a universalist history, they try to show how the *vacanas* are always already Christian, or 'modernist,' and therefore worthy of the West's attention. Their enterprise is supported by the asymmetry between English and Kannada created and reinforced by colonial and neocolonial discourse. This is an asymmetry that allows translators to simplify the text in a predictable direction, toward English and the Judeo-Christian tradition and away from the multiplicity of indigenous languages and religions, which have to be homogenized before they can be translated (180).

The detailed, at once scholarly and theoretically dense, analysis that follows is immensely confident and persuasive. Niranjana's major argument rests on her emphasis upon the invocation of the 'linga' in Allama's *Vacana*—it is

the privileged 'figure' for this text . . . [the] 'originary' figure for the entire corpus of Saivite poetry. The *linga* is/is not Siva or god; it is a form for formlessness, a shape for shapelessness. It is an attempt to articulate that which cannot be articulated in the mystic experience, and in the poem-fragment it eventually turns out to be an articulation of a disarticulation (178).

Ramanujam's 'refusal to translate or inscribe the *linga* is, therefore, a refusal to interrogate the most significant image in Allama's text.' Niranjana unembarrassedly presses her own translation, not as 'superior' to the others, and certainly not as more 'faithful' to the original (since her sustained attempt throughout the book has been to free translation from the problematic of fidelity/betrayal), but as the version most consistent with her theoretical and political assessment of the function of translation: 'to resist containment, to re-mark textuality, to dislodge or disturb the fixation on any one term or meaning, to substitute *translation* for representation in the strict sense.' Niranjana thus negotiates an important shift in the way in which we address the question of translation. Her own privileging of 'figure' and 'play' as the tropes of the poem, as well as her frequent glossing of her



translation from Derrida and Benjamin, and the determined indeterminacy of her rendering ("Who can find your figuration"—is neither a question nor an affirmation but both at the same time'), are undoubtedly the marks of her own theoretical predilection. But this is not to pronounce her as trapped within a historical bind. The post-colonial translator remains alert to the problem of the issue of representation in the texts of her culture as a *conscious* means of refusing 'origins,' inscribing 'heterogeneity,' and arriving at a greater 'complexity' of the self. Niranjana's work thus impresses by the strenuousness both of its endeavour and of its political commitment.

RAJESWARI SUNDER RAJAN  
Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University  
Delhi

**WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM**

**The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore-560001

*Proprietors of:*

**DECCAN HERALD, PRAJAVANI, SUDHA & MAYURA**

## **New Scholarly Books From PRAGATI**

**The Politics of Bhutan**

**by PARMANAND**

*Demy 8vo, 260 pages, Rs. 250*

**Foundations of Indian Polity**

**by CHITTA RANJAN ROY**

*Demy 8vo, 264 pages, Rs. 280*

**Indigo and The Raj**

**by PRABHAT KUMAR SHUKLA**

*Demy 8vo, 212 pages, Rs. 250*

**Imperial Retreat**

**by S.B. SINGH**

*Demy 8vo, 249 pages, Rs. 210*

**Quit India Movement**

**by Y.B. MATHUR**

*Demy 8vo, 212 pages, Rs. 200*

**Rural Development and Prosperity**

**Edited by DOOL SINGH**

*Demy 8vo, 148 pages, Rs. 200*

**Workers' Participation and Workers' Ownership**

**by RUDDAR DATT**

*Demy 8vo, 362 pages, Rs. 395*

**Privatisation: Bane or Panacea**

**by RUDDAR DATT**

*Demy 8vo, (due February 1993)*

Special Discount on 1-3 titles 15%, 4 & above 20%. If full amount remitted in advance post free.

### **ATTENTION AUTHORS**

Manuscripts in Social Sciences are invited for publication. We can ensure a high standard of production and marketing. Please contact Editor at the following address:



### **PRAGATI PUBLICATIONS**

9926, Library Road, Azad Market  
Delhi 110006. Phone: 7514747  
Fax 0091-11-5455952

VAIDYARATNAM P.S. VARIER'S

# ARYA VAIDYA SALA

KOTTAKKAL

adapted the  
Science of Sages to Modern Ages

Ayurvedic system is centuries old  
Propounded by sages of years old  
A divine gift and was not known  
Kottakkal made it well known

Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala is a household name because:

- (i) Its genuine Ayurvedic medicines give relief to millions suffering from chronic diseases.
- (ii) Its nursing home is well equipped with modern amenities and undertakes Panchakarma treatment, Vasti, Dhara, Pizhichal, etc. A house for homely treatment.
- (iii) It runs a Research and Development Department for the development of Ayurveda.
- (iv) Its herbal garden maintains large varieties of Ayurvedic medicinal plants.
- (v) It promotes Ayurvedic education.

**Contact:** ARYA VAIDYA SALA, KOTTAKKAL

Phone: H.O. MBX 16

Pin code: 676 503

**Branches:** Kozhikode, Palghat, Tirur, Erode, Ernakulam, Trivandrum, Madras, Cannanore, Coimbatore, New Delhi and more than 400 authorised agencies

# CAMBRIDGE

## Science and the Enlightenment

THOMAS L. HANDKINS

A non-technical general history of eighteenth-century science covering both the physical and the life sciences.

28619 0 PB £10.95

*Now in paperback*

## What is Life?

*with Mind and Matter and Autobiographical Sketches*

ERWIN SCHRODINGER

With a Foreword by ROGER PENROSE

'This book is a gem with many facets... one can read it in a few hours; one will not forget it in a lifetime.'

*Scientific American*

£5.95 net A PB 0 521 42708 8

216x135mm 194pp. 15 line diagrams

*Now in paperback*

## A Mathematician's Apology

G.H. HARDY

With Foreword by C.P. SNOW

'Great mathematicians rarely write about themselves or about their work, a few of them would have the literary gift to compose an essay of such charm, candour and insight... a manifesto for mathematics itself.'

*The Guardian*

£4.95 net A PB 0 521 42706 1

216x135mm 153pp.

*Now in paperback*

## Schrodinger

Life and Thought

WALTER MOORE

Walter Moore has drawn upon the recollections of Schrodinger's family and friends, as well as contemporary records, diaries and letters, to produce the most comprehensive and accessible book available on life and work of this great man of twentieth century science, whose work on wave mechanics revolutionised physics.

228x152mm 528pp. 40 half-tones




0 521 43767 9 Paperback



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

---

 The Marxian Theory of Socialism and the Experience of Socialist Societies <b>Irfan Habib</b>	3
Cohesion, Conflicts and Contradictions within the Indian State <b>C.P. Bhambhri</b>	25
The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege <b>Madhumita Roy</b>	36
 On the Social Organization of Urban Space—Subversions and Appropriations <b>Neera Chandhoke</b>	63
REVIEW ARTICLE Stalin's Russia <b>Arvind Vyas</b>	74
REVIEW ARTICLE Advaita's Waterloo <b>Vinay Lal</b>	82
BOOK REVIEWS	90
 OBITUARY	102

# SOCIAL SCIENTIST

VOLUME 21

NUMBERS 5-6

MAY-JUNE 1993

## ADVISORY EDITORS

Ashok Mitra  
Amalendu Guha  
Irfan Habib  
Amiya Bagchi  
Kishore Thekkedath  
Jacob Eapen

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Thomas Isaac  
Sanjaya Baru  
Atis Dasgupta  
Javeed Alam  
V.K. Ramachandran  
Venkatesh Athreya

## CIRCULATION & ADVERTISEMENT

C-20 Qutab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016. Phone: 6862924

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

### Inland

Single issue	Rs. 15
Double issue	Rs. 20
Annual (individuals)	Rs. 150
Annual (institutions & libraries)	Rs. 200
Annual (students)	Rs. 100
2 years (individuals)	Rs. 225
3 years (individuals)	Rs. 300
(Rs. 10 extra if by outstation cheque)	

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Madhu Prasad  
Utsa Patnaik  
R.R. Krishnan  
D. Raghunandan  
C. Rajamohan  
C.P. Chandrasekhar

## MANAGING EDITOR

Rajendra Prasad

## EDITOR

Prabhat Patnaik

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

C-20 Qutab Institutional  
Area, New Delhi 110 016

## Foreign (In US Dollars)

Annual:	
Air mail	60
Sea mail	50

ISSN 0970 - 0293

The grant for publication from Indian Council of Historical Research is gratefully acknowledged.

*Social Scientist* is listed in the International Current Awareness Services and its contents are indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Printed and distributed by Tulika Print Communication Services Pvt. Ltd.  
C-20, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 016.

## Editorial

Over the last several months, *Social Scientist* has been carrying a series of articles analysing what went wrong in the erstwhile socialist countries. Professor Irfan Habib's lead article in the present number, which represents the text of the P.C. Joshi Memorial Lecture for 1993 delivered by him, belongs to this series. This article is notable as much for its theoretical moorings, as for the breadth of its scope: it covers a vast range of issues, from the question of contradictions in a socialist society, to the role of socialist democracy, to technical questions of the political economy of socialism.

Habib draws attention to three crucial contradictions in a socialist society: between the proletariat and the State, between mental and manual labour, and between town and country. Given the existence of a privileged stratum which constitutes a proto-bourgeois element, these contradictions can take on the character of 'separate or multi-faceted class-struggles'. The ideological disarming of the proletariat, as well as its growing economic 'alienation', as a result of the economic atrophy arising due to bureaucratisation, can create conditions where the class-offensive of the proto-bourgeois elements can lead to a restoration of capitalism.

Habib's emphasis on the implications of bureaucratisation for the collapse of socialism, and his stress on the need for socialist democracy, as distinct from a centralised one-party dictatorship, as an integral part of the socialist project, would be accepted by most socialists today, no matter what reservations they had on this score some years ago. On the analysis of the collapse of socialism, however, certain unanswered questions still remain. First, in what discernible sense did the extant socialist economies experience an *economic* crisis, other than what can be deduced *post-facto* from their collapse? If the *economic* alienation of the workers was a consequence of the economic atrophy of these societies, then this atrophy was in comparison to what: the past performance of these very economies, or the expectations of these workers, or the so-called 'success' of capitalism? Any one of these would raise a host of further questions. And the last of these, which is subscribed to by many commentators, raises in particular the question: can we talk of the dynamics of the extant socialist economies without simultaneously



talking of the dynamics of extant capitalist economies? Second, how does China fit into this analysis? If it is on the way to a full restoration of capitalism, as has happened in the USSR and Eastern Europe, then how do we explain its remarkable economic performance precisely during this restoration, in contrast to that of the latter? On the other hand, if this performance is limited in some way to the fact of the Communist Party remaining in power, then how is the economic atrophy, a feature supposedly of bureaucratic degeneration, negated despite the undoubted continuance of bureaucratisation? Third, if domination by a proto-bourgeoisie resulting in economic-alienation of the workers could lead to a collapse of socialism, then how is it that despite domination by a full-fledged bourgeoisie, which one might have thought would result in far greater economic alienation of the workers, capitalism, far from collapsing, appears well-entrenched? There can be several possible answers to this question, but each of them would raise a host of further questions. To say all this is merely to underline the fact that while the conclusions from Habib's bold and sincere attempt are unexceptionable, several additional dimensions have to be added to our analysis of what happened.

It is often suggested that the so-called 'retreat' of the State, characteristic of new economic policy-regimes in India and elsewhere, really represents a transition to a more blatantly partisan State which explicitly makes 'national interest' identical with the interest of certain specific social classes; a corollary is drawn that this transition would be associated with a corresponding shift to more and more authoritarian forms of governance. C.P. Bhambhri in his paper joins issue with this argument in the Indian context. The Indian State, he argues, is not a 'fully formed State', and lacks appropriate instruments for implementing and enforcing an authoritarian regime. In such a situation the emergence of social instability could well give rise to a range of other disturbing scenarios: episodes of aimless social violence, with a helpless State watching from the sidelines, or even a tendency towards Balkanisation. The other side of the picture, in a sense, is captured in Neera Chandhoke's article. In an interesting study of the social organisation of urban space, she makes the point that what has emerged in urban India is not a stable, ordered and organised wage-labour force, but a vast uncontrolled urban mass, located in squatter settlements, engaged largely in the informal economy, uncontrolled by and autonomous of all disciplinary mechanisms, with a great capacity for outbursts, but little capacity for sustained struggles for social transformation.

Finally, Modhumita Roy's paper on 'The Englishing of India' analyses the motivations that underlay the ready acceptance of English by the different elements of the colonial Indian society. In the matter of English education, she argues, not much has changed since the early nineteenth century, even forty-odd years after independence.

IRFAN HABIB\*

## *The Marxian Theory of Socialism and the Experience of Socialist Societies*

It is a special mark of honour for me to be invited to deliver a lecture dedicated to the memory of Comrade P.C. Joshi, one of the pioneers of the Indian Communist movement. His name has come to be associated in my mind inseparably with some of my own vivid schoolboy memories of the forties: reading the news of the Red Army's defiance of Hitler: groping towards the source of its inspiration, the Bolshevik Revolution; introduction to Marxist literature, for the first time circulating in India; encounter with its populariser, the Communist Party; *People's War* pictures of its General Secretary, P.C. Joshi . . . I did not in fact see Comrade Joshi until 1954 (at Kanpur). Characteristically, he never failed to recognise me afterwards, when I met him on fewer than half a dozen occasions over the next two decades; and his affectionate friendliness was never diminished, though I could not agree with some of his views.

P.C. Joshi devoted his whole life to the Communist Movement; and he had a long, almost romantic attachment to the Soviet Union (in which, of course, he was not alone). He did not live to see the Soviet Union collapse and die, in what to many would seem practically an act of suicide. I have, therefore, felt that the theme most appropriate for the present lecture would be an analysis of the concept of socialist society as it has developed in Marxian theory, that is, in the classics (Marx and Engels), the writings of Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, and the studies of Marxist economists, like Lange and Dobb. Very provisionally, an effort is made to scrutinise these theoretical writings and to pursue their logic. The theory is, then, sought to be checked with the historical experience of socialist societies, making free use of what we now know for certain about their past. On such a subject one can hardly claim to come up with novel illumination. My sole object is to identify and arrange the major questions. My own answers are throughout provisional and are made with much trepidation, though

---

\* Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

some of the views here presented I have held since 1976: it was then that I first essayed a study of the 'contradictions of socialist society' for a speech at a condolence meeting for Mao Tse-tung.

## I

In Marxist theory socialism is a stage of society which follows the overthrow of capitalism. The classics have defined three important features of a socialist society:

(a) All means of production are 'socialised', that is, brought under public or cooperative ownership. Since capitalists and landlords have been expropriated, there is no private profit and rent; and what was previously the product of 'surplus labour' of the workers, which provided these exploitative incomes, becomes available for (1) distribution among workers as additions to their wages or for social services; (2) replacement and enlargement of the means of production; and (3) costs of administration, which is essential for both (1) and (2). (See especially Marx: 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, II, Moscow, 1949, pp. 19-21).

(b) Socialist society replaces 'anarchy in social production' by 'conscious organisation on a planned basis' and eliminates the 'waste' of productive forces, inescapable in capitalist production, the waste reaching 'its zenith in (periodic) crises' (Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow, 1947, pp. 419-20).

(c) Socialism continuously expands production at a much higher rate than would be possible for capitalism. This is implicit in many passages in Marx's and Engels's writings, and fairly explicit in Engels's speech at Marx's graveside (1883), when he presented the perspective of an increase, 'under socialism', of 'the social productive forces and their yield by planned operation of the whole production in an ever increasing measure' (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, II, p. 151). Such a process is necessary for reaching the higher state of Communism, where at last there would be an abundance of goods, for every one to be provided with 'his needs' ('Critique of the Gotha Programme': *ibid*, II p. 23).

One of the common assumptions in Marxist theoretical analyses of the economics of a socialist society have been that (a) above must inevitably lead to (b) and (c). This is found to be particularly the case with Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Moscow, 1952. Here, on p. 45, 'the basic law of socialism' is defined as

'the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques'.

Since Stalin emphasizes that an economic 'law' operates 'independently of our will' (pp. 93-95, etc.), it follows that the above quotation does not describe a goal to be achieved but states the objective inevitability of a continuously expanding production resulting from socialist or public ownership of the means of production, i.e. of (b) and (c) automatically following upon (a).

But this is surely a point to be established rather than assumed, especially in the light of recent events. Our study of socialism should therefore start from the detailed scrutiny of (a) alone, so as to establish without preconceptions what are the possibilities of development once a socialist economy is established and the means of production are made public property.

## II

We assume, to begin with, that we have here a society where the state owns and controls *all* means of production and that the state has no particular interests of its own, as against those of the citizens at large. The latter assumption will have to be examined later; but for the present we will proceed with it.

Adopting these two assumptions, the second one implicitly, Engels stated without qualification, that 'the seizure of the means of production by society puts an end to commodity production' (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 420). Stalin reads this formula in a rather unpersuasive manner: Engels was thinking of the seizure of all 'means of production'. Therefore, since in the USSR public property was confined to industry, while agriculture was under cooperative property, commodity production had to continue until the collective farms too were transformed into state farms or public property. He makes it seem as if commodity production in the socialist economy was inescapable only because the collective farms were insisting on money-payments for their products and would not be satisfied with goods-exchange (*Problems of Socialism*, pp. 13-21). Here he totally overlooks the inevitability of commodity production so long as there is a system of wages, though elsewhere (p. 23) he admits that 'consumer-goods which are needed to compensate the labour power expended in the process of production are produced and realized in our country as commodities'.

The duality in Stalin's treatment of the matter probably stems from an anxiety not to challenge directly the theoretical validity of the view adopted by both Marx and Engels that commodity production would end as soon as the capitalists are expropriated after a proletarian revolution. However, the weakness of this position, even though adopted by Marx, can be seen from Marx's own exposition of it in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme'.

Marx says here (Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, II, p. 21) that 'within the cooperative society based on the common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products'—in other words, there is no commodity production. Then, how does one obtain the articles of consumption one needs? The answer is that:

'the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions [for capital replacement and enlargement, social services, and administration-costs] have been made—exactly what he gives to it. He has given to it his individual quantum of labour. He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of his labour (after deducting his labour for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour'. (*ibid*, pp. 21–22).

A certificate is given to the worker which would enable him to obtain goods he wants for their use-values to him. But since, as Marx recognises (*ibid*, p. 22), each individual is different, and differently placed (in terms of marital status, family, and abilities), his pattern of demand, depending upon the marginal utility of each good for him, would be different from that of another. The practically infinite differences among individuals' patterns of demand could only be accommodated if the certificate was as infinitely divisible. Smaller and smaller non-transferable coupons could possibly serve, but would increase the costs of administration without securing the utmost possible approximation to the varying sizes of units with which the individual would need to convert his 'certificate' into goods according to his own scale of preference. The best and most efficient and least expensive coupon would have to be exchangeable and, therefore, divisible at will; as such it would be nothing other than a token of money, or currency note and coin. We therefore, come back to money, and so to commodity-exchange.

If, then, for one's labour one receives money, how can one argue that wage-labour no longer exists under socialism? Stalin insisted that since there was no longer capitalism, and no 'surplus value' (though one should, perhaps, rather say, no private appropriation of surplus value), there could be no possible category now of 'labour power as a commodity' (*Problems of Socialism*, p. 21). In this, undoubtedly, he had the support of the classics. Had not Marx proclaimed in 1865 'the revolutionary watchword, "abolition of the wages system"' as a replacement of 'the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work"' ('Wages, Price and Profit': Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, I, Moscow, 1950 pp. 404–5)? Still, when in 1875 Marx grappled with the problem of payment for labour under socialism, one notices his cautious hesitations:

'What we have to deal with here is a communist [i.e. the socialist or first phase of communist] society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society . . . Here [in payment for labour] the same principle prevails as that regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is exchange of equal values . . . As far as the distribution of the latter [individual means of consumption] among the individual producers is concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity-equivalents . . . Hence *equal right* here is still in principle *bourgeois* right. The right of the producers is *proportional* to the labour they supply'. ('Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, II, pp. 23-23. His own emphasis).

For an individual, his 'labour-process' thus remains that of free wage-labour. One calls it 'free' here, not only in the sense that the labourer is free of capitalist exploitation, but also in the 'bourgeois' sense that, as in the ideal conditions of 'perfect competition', he would be the beneficiary of a total mobility of labour: he would have the right to shift to whichever occupation that, by his inclinations and interests, suited him best. If this did not happen (as, indeed, has been the case in some socialist societies), there would not be, to that extent, 'equivalent values' possessed by labour in different industries.

That labour power remains a commodity under Socialism has an important bearing on the notion of 'surplus'. From the point of view of 'society', what time the worker spends at labour over and above that necessary to replace his wage so as to provide the social dividend (Lange), may also be deemed 'necessary labour' (Marx, *Capital*, I, pp. 539-40); but from the worker's point-of-view (his immediate self-interest) it would still be 'surplus' labour. Just as an economic theory of Socialism must treat of wages as wages, it must equally treat of surplus labour and surplus-value, appropriated by society or, in its name, by the state, and not consider them as obsolete or non-existent. In other words one should whole-heartedly endorse Schumpeter's counsel (1911/1926) that 'it is practically important for a communist system to recognise this clearly and always to separate profit from wages' (Joseph A. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, New York, 1961, p. 147. Note that 'profit' is here 'entrepreneurial profit' of his own definition).

Both the articles of consumption (i.e. products of 'Department II' in Marx's definition in *Capital*) and labour power remain commodities in socialism. What need not enter distribution as commodities are capital goods (or 'means of production',—products of Marx's 'Department I'), since whether they are used in Department I or II, their owner would remain the same, namely, the State. (Cf. Oscar Lange (1936-7), 'On the Economic Theory of Socialism' in Lange and F.M. Taylor, ed. B.E.

Lipincott, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism*, Minneapolis, 1938/1984, p. 73: 'There is no market for capital goods and productive resources outside of labour'). Stalin therefore explicitly denied that the means of production could be 'commodities' in the same sense as consumer-goods (*Problems of Socialism*, pp. 58-59).

Marx and Engels spoke of labour as directly establishing the cost of each product (whence, let us say,  $\text{Cost} = \text{Labour}$ , or  $C = L$ ) in a socialist society. (We may assume that by labour they meant here living labour as well as stored-up labour, as in machinery, buildings, raw materials etc.) In a socialist society, we are told, apart from determining the share of each member in the total products of society available for distribution, labour-time acquires another function: 'Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community' (*Capital*, I, Moore-Aveling trans., ed. Dona Torr, London, 1938, p. 50). The thesis obtains considerable elaboration in Engels's *Anti-Duhring*, pp. 460-61, where the argument concludes with the statement: 'People will be able to manage everything very simply, without the intervention of the famous 'value'.' We have now seen that this could be the case only in respect of products of Department I. In the case of products of Department II and that of labour-power, the formula  $C = V = L$  ( $\text{Cost} = \text{Value} = \text{Labour-time}$ ) would operate. 'The famous 'value' would still retain the field here.

We are, then, faced with a situation which F.M. Taylor conceived in his essay on 'The Guidance of Production in a Socialist State' (1928). Once the money income of the citizens (as wages presumably) was determined by the State, the citizen in turn 'should dictate to the state what shall be produced in return for that income' merely by the purchase-choices he would make (Essay in B.E. Lippincott, ed., *On the Economic Theory of Socialism*, pp. 41-54, esp. p. 48). This would happen, Taylor said, if the cost-price of each commodity, when found to equal the demand price, was accepted as adequate proof that the commodity ought to be produced (*ibid.*, p. 54). In other words 'value' would determine the scale and composition of production in the socialist society, since whatever was sold was actually purchased from wages alone. Though the competitive mechanism is not available, a trial-and-error process substitutes for it. The substitute should be more efficient because the errors would be rapidly corrected for the simple reason that the state, as the single producer, would have a range of information not available to the myriads of mutually hostile competitors under capitalism.

Lange (*ibid.*, pp. 57-1430) in his seminal effort of 1936-37, built upon this thesis, elaborating and refining it, and introducing the consideration of a number of important related issues. He recognised that while the equation  $C=V=L^1$  would apply to products of

Department II (equal in value in aggregate to the size of wages paid in both Departments I and II), prices being determined by the ordinary interaction of supply and demand, the products of Department I would not have any market mechanisms to help fix their prices; and, therefore, production had to be organised here in accordance with 'accounting prices' (defined as 'indices of alternatives available, fixed for accounting purposes'—p. 73). These prices would be fixed by the 'Planning Board', it is true, but these too would be corrected by any commodity surpluses or shortages that would result from errors in price-fixation (pp. 81–2). If these were adjusted to the Taylorian consumer-goods' demand-governed prices, it would appear as if the accounting prices in Department I could become more and more accurate approximations to value, as the information at the hands of the state and its capacity to act on it improved.

Here, then, we have one reason why if a socialist economy did not use its tools efficiently, it would have difficulty in securing the feature of socialism, that in the beginning we had described at (b), namely, escaping the cycles of productive instability found in capitalism (See M. Dobb's critique (1939) of Lange in Dobb, *On Economic Theory and Socialism*, London, 1955, p. 43). Any failure in the accuracy of response to consumer demand in Department II and failure to mesh 'accounting' prices in Department I to the sale prices of Department II, could generate waste of productive resources comparable to or possibly even exceeding that of capitalism. The waste might not be revealed through a periodic crisis, because it could be concealed by further deviations of prices from commodity-values; but there would still be a real waste and setback to production, though the GNP, at formal prices or in terms of material products (inclusive of products not saleable at actual labour-time costs), may show growth.

There could be technical methods used to prevent such a dislocation. In the 1920s Soviet planners had devised a method of 'material balances'; this could be deemed an ancestor to Leontief's input-output analysis, to which Soviet planners turned rather late in the late 1950s. Linear programming and computerization could also have been of great assistance (Maurice Dobb (1960) in his *Capitalism, Development and Planning*, London, 1967, pp. 156–61; also Oscar Lange (1955–56), *Essays on Economic Planning*, Calcutta, 2nd ed., 1967, pp. 42–82). It can be argued that these devices should enable a socialist society to accommodate its sale-prices (Department II) and accounting prices (Department I) rapidly and closely enough to real values to rule out the maladjustments to demand that plague capitalistic production. The reason why these techniques were late in being used in the USSR, and then also not with adequate speed and efficiency, needs to be studied. But the cause of the failure of socialism in the realm of prices, and then of production, does not surely lie merely in the late use of these techniques. The latter can be no more than a symptom: it can



hardly be the cause. One major cause, it would seem, lay in the state's position as monopoly producer.

In the Taylor-Lange argument and Dobb's critique of Lange's position (1939: in *On Economic Theory and Socialism*, London, 1955, pp. 41-55), there was one basic assumption: Once the socialist state has determined the income of its citizens, then the commodity price of the products of Department II can be fixed in close approximation to value by simply letting it respond to demand generated by that income. But while working out the assumption, Lange found that his 'Planning Board' would have to ensure that output was expanded till the marginal cost equalled price. This directive would have to be imposed even 'if plants or whole industries are involved in losses', such imposition by decree being a substitute for what in free competition is imposed by influx or exodus of competing firms. The 'managers of production' here are just to be told firmly to eschew 'the aim of maximizing profit' (*On the Theory of Socialism*, pp. 75-79).

The very fact that the production managers have to be ordered to desist from maximising profits and to go on increasing output even if there is loss (on the analogy of capitalist competition), shows that, if such orders were not given, or, if given, were not enforced, there could be a different kind of result. One must remember that by our own very assumptions, the state under socialism is a monopoly firm, indeed, the most comprehensive one of its kind. Conventional economics tells us that for the monopolist, seeking to maximise his profit, the 'most profitable output will be that output at which his marginal costs and his marginal revenue are equal to one another' (Benham). This would be an output far less than the output in 'perfect competition', where it could go up to where the price equals marginal cost. Clearly, then, the natural tendency of a 'production manager' of the state would be to so restrict his production as to raise the profits to the maximum, rather than lower the price by increasing output. Such a situation immediately becomes obvious in socialist economies when prices are 'freed' for public enterprises: production falls and unemployment increases. These conditions became especially noticeable in the last years of the Soviet Union, when even the TIME panel of economists warned against indiscriminate removal of price-controls.

There is yet another possibility inherent in the monopoly position of the state as producer. What Lange said of the private producer, unchallenged by competition, could apply to it. Such a firm

'will introduce innovations only when the capital invested is amortised, or if the reduction of cost is so pronounced as to offset the devaluation of the capital already invested, i.e., if the average total cost becomes lower than the average prime cost of producing with the old machinery or equipment'. (*On the Economic Theory of Socialism*, p. 112).

It is rather surprising that, despite the comprehensive nature of his investigation of the mechanics of a socialist economy, Lange did not consider the possibility of retardation of technological innovation within it for the same reasons as apply to a monopoly-capitalist firm. It could, indeed, be argued that the technological stagnation in the Soviet and East European economies from the 1960s onwards, about which there were recurring complaints, was at least partly the result of the tendency here described, which would, unless counteracted, operate under any monopoly, whether capitalist or socialist.

These considerations should be sufficient to explain why the feature (c) of socialism, namely, a continuous enlargement of production, cannot be held to follow necessarily from our situation (a) or public ownership of all means of production. On the contrary, (c) could be assured only if the state's monopoly over supply was either eliminated or conducted under a regime-by-decree effective enough to curb its inherently restrictive tendencies.

### III

Two distinct solutions (both not ultimately successful) to the problem we have been considering were therefore attempted in the USSR and other socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

There was first an attempt to eliminate monopoly, i.e. to restore the essence of market mechanism by eschewing a single state-firm, and creating competing publicly-owned or cooperative enterprises. The owner of each firm would be the state or the working members of the cooperative, so that there would be no (or very limited) private appropriation of surplus-value. The two well-known models of this attempt, if one ignores Lenin's NEP, have been Yugoslavia and Hungary. The difficulty in such a system is that if everything is left to be determined by competition, all the disadvantages of capitalism are bound to occur, generating attempts at monopoly, on the one hand, and anarchy of production, on the other. An economic crisis preceded the tragic political collapse of Yugoslavia; and the Hungarian economy too ran into a succession of difficulties till the final abandonment of the socialist structure (whereafter the difficulties for the people have, of course, not ceased). In the USSR under Gorbachov, the entire turn to the market ended in the disaster we are all familiar with, viz., a continuous downward swing in production (see K.K. Das Gupta, 'Reflections on the Last Decade of Existence of Soviet and East European Socialism', *Social Scientist*, No. 235 (December 1992), pp. 19-41, for a convenient survey from a theoretical point of view). In China since 1979-80 the market mechanism has been more successfully adopted, but, then, it has involved the acceptance not only of the market, but also of elements of capitalist production. We have here the continuous enlargement of a capitalist sector under the patronage of

the Communist Party, a capitalist sector making full use of the infrastructure and capital-goods industries created by socialism. China is, therefore, witnessing, despite its remarkable growth during the 1980s and thereafter, a recurrence by turn of a 'heating-up' and 'recession' of the economy very much in the manner of the economic upswings and downswings of capitalist countries.

The other possible way is what was adopted in the Soviet Union from the late 1920s, in China from the 1950s, and also in most east European countries during their early socialist period. This model is often called 'Stalinist' as if in deprecation. But one must understand from our discussion so far the compulsions that brought it about. Neither an escape from economic crises nor a continuously ascending rate of growth could be obtained by keying all economic activity to the market-mechanism, real in the case of products of Department II and hypothetical in that of the products of Department I. The experience of the NEP in the 1920s had been sufficient to show the limitations of a reliance on the market for capital accumulation. A continuous growth could only occur at that stage of soviet economic development, if Department I was expanded much more rapidly than Department II; but it could hardly be expected that 'surplus values' (from products of Department II) alone could sustain a forced growth of Department I. 'Tribute' from the peasantry frankly acknowledged to be a source of capital ('something in the nature of "tribute": Stalin (1928), *Works*, Moscow, 1954, XI, p. 197; cf. Dobb, *Capitalism, Development and Planning*, pp. 126-139) could not be extracted beyond a point. Ultimately, capital could be raised further only by restricting real wages (i.e. providing a much slower growth of Department II) through controlling supply and fixing prices, and diverting profits so obtained into Department I as capital. These measures, especially if the priority given to Department I, or Heavy Industry, was to be a constant rather than a temporary feature, meant that 'value', based on the pattern of consumer-demand for Department II products, could no longer be treated as 'the regulator' of investments, a fact Stalin strongly emphasized in 1952 (*Problems of Socialism*, pp. 27-29). Since the state would dictate both output and prices of goods of both Departments I and II, there would be no easily recognizable 'maximization of profit' through state monopoly either (though it might in effect take place).

It could be argued that such a deviation from strict conformity to 'value' was implicit in the classics, not only because commodity production was not envisaged for Socialism, as we have seen, but because the concept of labour-time as the regulator, was combined with the concept of planning. The 'apportionment' of the labour time of the whole community would be 'in accordance with a definite social plan [which] maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community'. So Marx had said in *Capital*, I, p. 50, in a passage already quoted. And Engels had

spoken of 'the replacement of the anarchy of social production by a socially planned regulation of production in accordance with the needs both of the society as a whole and of each individual' (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 415), of 'social production upon a predetermined plan' (p. 423), and, finally, of 'arranging its [society's] plan of production in accordance with its means of production, which include, in particular, the labour forces' (p. 461). Surely, a 'social plan' would be meaningless if it were to follow merely the dictates of market-demand generated by the funds advanced for wages, such being the only possible available index of labour-time embodied in production. In other words, if Marx's 'proper proportions' of resource-allocation were to be achieved by a plan, it would be patently impossible to insist that all goods produced must exchange at ratios determined by the labour-time embodied in them. This means that 'accounting prices' must increasingly diverge from even hypothetical market-prices. Lange indeed allowed for such a possibility and opined that so long as such prices had 'internal consistency' and so long as a system of controlled distribution ('rationing') and restrictions on mobility of labour were enforced, the system could work (*Economic Theory of Socialism*, pp. 90-94). Indeed, the Soviet experience shows that it could work well for a long time. Plans based on centralised allocations and accounting prices helped to industrialise Russia, China, Poland and other countries under the banner of socialism. To that extent they have helped to change the face of the world.

The major difficulty, to Lange, was political: citizens would be dissatisfied with rationing and control (pp. 95-97). However, it has turned out that there are also economic weaknesses inherent in the system, which must tend to undermine it in the long run, unless counteracting measures are constantly taken.

First of all, without a scale of consumers' preference being available for fixing prices, the internal consistency among accounting prices would tend to be lost. Stalin himself provided one example: it was seriously suggested by the economic authorities in the USSR that prices of wheat, cotton and baked bread be made equal. Had the Soviet leadership approved of this, 'we would have found ourselves without cotton' (Stalin, *Problems of Socialism*, pp. 24-25). Many other instances of such 'inconsistencies' arising out of 'arbitrary prices' were brought up in discussions on East European socialist economies in the late 1950s and 1960s, notably the common phenomena of high prices set for the products of light industry and low for those of heavy industry (cf. Dobb, *Capitalism, Development and Planning*, pp. 149-55, 167-207). Clearly, if there are such internal inconsistencies in the price-system, bottlenecks and waste in production cannot be avoided.

But there is a major problem too underlying the blanket priority given to Department I. Stalin spoke as if this was to be a permanent feature under socialism. The so-called 'law of balanced (proportionate)

development', a term used perhaps with an eye to Marx's passage in *Capital*, I, p. 50, above quoted, seems to consist essentially in assuring this priority, 'because the national economy cannot be continuously expanded without giving primacy to the production of means of production' (Stalin, *Problems of Socialism*, p. 28). By 1965 so sympathetic an analyst of Soviet economy as Dobb was qualifying this proposition on the basis of a largely theoretical discussion, though he continued to acknowledge that higher investment in heavy industry had served as a crucial lever of economic expansion (Dobb, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-23). Much earlier, Mao Tse-tung in his speech 'Ten Major Relationships' (April 1956), while accepting the precedence of Department I, criticised nevertheless the 'lopsided stress on heavy industry to the neglect of agriculture and light industry [which] results in a shortage of goods on the market and an unstable currency', a phenomenon which he explicitly recognised as existing in 'the Soviet Union and a number of East European countries' (*Selected Works*, V, Peking, 1977, pp. 285-6).

There should be no doubt that investment in Department I would be largely for 'its own sake', if production and accounting prices were so set that consumer-demand would not have any direct role in governing supply and prices. Preobrazhensky had remarked, amidst the heady Soviet discussions of the 1920s, that industrial expansion did not need a market outside its own sphere; its own subsequent expansion would absorb, by way of 'productive consumption', the products of the present phase of expansion (cited by Dobb, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5). The demand generated for the supply of consumer-goods, i.e. needs of machinery for Department II, may, then, become irrelevant to the enlargement of Department I. But, if so, there would not only be recurring consumer goods shortages in the socialist economies of which Mao Tse-tung spoke and of which we now know so well, but there would also be an enormous misdirection in the development of the capital-goods and heavy industry (Department I), so that its rate of expansion calculated in formal terms would have to be much devalued in terms of ultimate effectiveness in producing consumer-goods, which must after all be the real, ultimate purpose of socialist planning.

We see, then, that socialist states have had two policy options: (i) to create competing public-owned or cooperative firms to break down monopoly and establish competition—there would then be no planning and the anarchy of capitalist production would be duplicated; or (ii) to establish planned production in order to secure steady industrial and economic expansion, without any periodic setbacks. The success of option (i) is debatable; option (ii) had remarkable success for a fairly long period, but patently broke down in the 'longer-run'.

In the rest of our discussion we will be concerned with the question why option (ii) has not worked after so much experience and whether it could in fact work. It is proposed to argue that any advance of a

socialist society is only possible if this option is pursued, and that this can indeed be done if there is a full recognition of the main contradictions of socialist societies and a continuous effort is made toward their resolution.

## IV

One possible reason why adoption of option (ii) might ultimately lead to a breakdown was the development of what Lange called 'bureaucratic degeneration'. In our preceding discussion we had followed the assumption that the socialist state 'has no particular interests of its own, as against those of the citizens at large'. Now we must give up the assumption to see what happens if the state, or those who control its apparatus, including planning, come to have interests that are different from those of its citizens. The 'bureaucrats' may

'impose a preference scale of their own for the guidance of production, (though) they have to camouflage the inconsistency of their preference scale with that of citizens by resorting to rationing in the sphere of producers' goods and of resources' (Lange, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism*, p. 96 and note).

Lange could have gone further and argued that the 'bureaucrats' might impose a 'preference-scale' that served them as a group (e.g. disproportionately high salaries, perquisites, etc., for themselves, constituting an increasing share of the wages fund; investments in firms and sectors of their own 'fiefs') rather than the society at large; and, in that case, the common citizen, as consumer, would find that the rate of increase in real wages lagged more and more behind the rate of increase of production in Department I, and he might ultimately even face an absolute decline in his real wages. On the other hand, the 'bureaucrats', given their vested interests, would resist any change in the imposed 'scale of preferences' unless the change favoured their interests. Consumer-goods shortages and resource wastage would therefore continue to grow till the economy ultimately reached a point of crisis.

Lange alluded in a footnote (on p. 96) to the possibility that this kind of bureaucratization might be happening in the Soviet Union. He was writing in 1936-37. In 1954 came Milovan Djilas's concept of the 'New Class', first in articles and then in the book of this title. In 1961-62, Mao Tse-tung warned against a situation where 'the state is to be managed by only a section of the people, that the people can enjoy labour rights, education rights, social insurance, etc., only under the management of certain people' ('Reading Notes on the Soviet Text Political Economy' in *Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York, 1977, p. 61); and he went on to consider the problem of 'vested interest groups', whose self-interest would hinder change (p. 63). A criticism was also

recorded of the Soviet system of 'one-man management' (or 'single leadership') principle for enterprises, hallowed by Lenin's own sanction (p. 86). In 1964, in the Chinese controversy with the Soviet Communist Party, the notion of 'a privileged stratum', fattening on socialism and controlling the socialist state, was first articulated with a considerable amount of factual presentation. This 'stratum' was seen as essentially *bourgeois* ('new bourgeois element'), whose interests could finally lead to a 'capitalist restoration' in the USSR (*People's Daily* and *Red Flag* joint editorial: 'On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and its Historical Lessons for the World', *Global Digest*, Hongkong, I (12), 1964, pp. 2-49). The situation could in time apply to China as well. If 'the cadres were to be corrupted and demoralised, then it would not take long, perhaps only several years or a decade, or several decades, at most, before a counter-revolutionary restoration on a national scale inevitably occurred and the whole of China would change its colour' (Mao Tse-Tung's comment, May 1963, quoted in the editorial, op. cit., p. 44). The passage was to be quoted again and again during the Cultural Revolution to justify the campaign against the alleged 'capitalist-roaders' which began in 1966. But Mao's words still stand as words of remarkable premonition.

Who controls the socialist state (and how) is the crucial question in determining the destiny of socialism. When socialism is established there is no blind economic 'law' which would take socialist society in one particular direction, that of advance. There are policy alternatives at every step; and the choice can always be coloured by group, sectional, and (ultimately) the choice-makers' own, interest as distinct from, and therefore, possibly opposed to, the interest of the people at large. Since, as we have seen, wages continue under socialism, and so does the rendering of surplus-labour, there must arise a growing sense of alienation of the worker from the socialist system under conditions where crucial economic decisions are taken without reference to him. For a long time the workers' recognition of the benefits rendered by the social services created by socialism would continue; but, ultimately, as the socialist economy atrophied under the direction of vested interests, the workers' attitude would change to hostility or indifference. The socialist structure would collapse under the internal economic and political strain, aided undoubtedly by the external capitalist environment which continuously generates Imperialism. The collapsing socialist economy now finds in the managers of yesterday the captains of capitalist industry of today. A kind of bureaucratic mafia capitalism takes over. This can be an acceptable description of how socialism founded upon the achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution, could be laid to rest in the USSR by a process of peaceful subversion, within a matter of two years (1990-92). The subsequent mutual slaughter in the nationalities, the galloping unemployment, the disappearance of social services, and, at last, the dispersal of the

Russian Supreme Soviet by use of artillery have announced the dawn of the full-fledged capitalist restoration and the onset of a characteristic bourgeois dictatorship.

How far the founders of Marxism could have foreseen this is, of course, questionable. But they realised that the socialist state could not and must not be a 'free state', i.e. free of control by the working class. Marx said:

'It is by no means the aim of the workers, who have rid themselves of the mentality of humble subjects, to set the state free . . . Freedom (rather) consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it' ('Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, II, p. 29).

In other words, the state could not be allowed to have an apparatus of power and set of interests, different from those of society at large. Such a state under socialism had therefore to be rigorously controlled by the wage-workers as a class. This explains the classic pronouncement which follows a little after the above passage:

'Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to it also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat' (Ibid, p. 30).

The term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' had been used by Marx as early as 1852 (letter to Joseph Weydemeyer: Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1956, p. 86), but the concept of 'the political supremacy' of the proletariat, and its being the ruling class under socialism, is present in the *Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

In much of political journalism of the Communist Movement the word mentally emphasized was 'dictatorship'. Persecution of the opponents of socialism, as well as dissidents within the Soviet Communist Party, the repressions of kulaks, the organised disappearances and secret executions of the 1930s and 1940s, were all justified as, at worst, the excesses of a necessary dictatorship. So also the later continuing restrictions on the press, job-transfer and simple travel, lasting in socialist societies until the 1980s. Any 'left' criticism of the Establishment was perhaps even more strictly forbidden than the so-called 'Human Rights' advocacy of the pro-Western groups.

What was forgotten here was the 'proletarian' part of the formula of 'Proletarian Dictatorship'. How did the wage-workers, as a class, decide for the state what total wage-bill, with what grades and composition, what social service allocation, and what capital replacement and expansion funds it should provide for? A voice in enterprise-management, though important (and in practice rather snuffed out under One-Man Management), was hardly relevant to the



heart of economic planning. One slogan attributed to Lenin was 'Communism is Soviet power plus electrification'. In other words, all actual power in the state as a whole should be exercised by the direct representatives of workers, to lend substance to the concept of 'Proletarian Dictatorship'.

But, unfortunately, Lenin himself more than once spoke as if the Dictatorship of the Proletariat meant 'Yes, the dictatorship of one Party' (quotations in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Pelican Books, 1966, I, p. 236). Stalin (1924) questioned the formula in this form but sought to replace it with another which hardly made much of a difference: 'The Soviets implement the dictatorship, while the Party guides the Soviets' (*Works*, VI, p. 270). Lenin had in mind a Party of 'professional revolutionaries', who, forged in a selfless revolutionary struggle, would bring under control or replace the self-serving bureaucracy bequeathed by the bourgeois regime (e.g. Lenin, *Selected Works*, II, Moscow, 1947, pp. 449-51). But as the original revolutionary fervour cooled, there would be an inevitable bureaucratization of the Party, the higher echelons of the Party and State would coalesce and a ruling stratum might emerge, controlling the Party itself.

It is, therefore, obvious that the almost juridical insistence on 'the leading role of the Communist Party' in socialist countries, could become a cover for the replacement of the working class as the mainspring of power by a privileged group, a proto-neo-bourgeoisie. B.T. Ranadive correctly pointed out that the leading role of the Communist Party cannot be established by a provision in the Constitution, as was done in the Brezhnev-era versions of the Soviet Union and Republican constitutions (1976, 1977) but by its actual work. This means that there should not only be full inner-party democracy, but the Communist Party (and there should be the possibility of more than one Communist Party under Socialism to offer policy-choices to the proletariat) should function amidst a plurality of parties. Two formulas developed by Mao Tse-tung, viz. the 'mass-line' (i.e. constant systematisation of ideas present among the masses and putting back the systematised ideas among the masses again) and the 'long term coexistence and mutual supervision' of multiple parties are significant strategic principles. Socialist Cuba's success in keeping popular support by its version of a 'mass line' is also worthy of note. If there is the possibility of a re-emergence of bourgeois ideas, these should surely be met by an ideological, and not a police, response. One recalls here Mao Tse-tung's own defence (1957) of his slogan, 'Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend', notably the statement that 'Marxism can only develop through (ideological) struggle' ('Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People', *Selected Works*, V, pp. 408-9). Five years later (1962) he stated that 'Both within and outside the Party there is advantage in allowing the minority to reserve their opinion', for—'In the beginning truth is not in

the hands of the majority of the people, but in the hands of a minority' ('On Democratic Centralism' in *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, ed. Stuart Schram, Penguin Books, 1974, p. 183). Only in such conditions would it be possible for proletarian democracy to function, put into effect new measures, and so attain the ability of restricting, if not entirely eliminating, the emergence of vested interests and privileged groups based on the state apparatus.

If such success could be achieved, it would be possible to see how a really 'balanced' planned resource-allocation could be made by keeping Department II production keyed to consumer (i.e. wage-earner's) demand, on the one hand, and transferring surplus revenues to Department I to create industries which (after allowing for legitimate defence expenditure) would really develop particular sectors of Department II so as to increase supply of consumer goods. Any trend towards restrictive monopolist practices would be prevented because the wage receivers would immediately see that these would restrict and diminish their own real wages. Such control may also ensure the rise of a new ethic in the leading stratum, who 'would in time think so differently that they would no more lay claim to profit [for themselves] than a statesman or a general would wish to keep the spoils of victory wholly or partly for himself' (Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, p. 145, discussing the presence of 'profit' in a communist society). Socialist democracy is, therefore, not only good in itself, but is also essential for the economic success of socialist planning.

Socialist democracy can, then, be seen, in its political form, as a way of resolving the contradiction between the dictatorship of the proletariat (in its classical sense) and the state as an autonomous institution (the 'free state' of the Lassalleans). For a long time the notion that there could be social contradictions inherent in socialism was hardly ever considered seriously by Marxists. But now there is likely to be little dispute over what, according to Lange (1957), 'it has been the merit of Mao Tse-tung to have recalled with emphasis'—that 'socialist society too develops through contradictions'. ('Political Economy of Socialism' in *Problems of Political Economy of Socialism*, ed. Oscar Lange, New Delhi, 1962, p. 3.)

The most important of these contradictions that it has to set itself to resolve, which certainly goes beyond, though it is also closely connected with, the one we have just outlined, is what Marx identified as 'the antithesis between mental and physical labour' ('Critique of the Gotha Programme', Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, II, p. 23). The qualitative difference in the two kinds of labour is important, and when Marx spoke of wages being paid according to labour, he underlined the fact that 'labour to serve as a measure must be defined by its duration or intensity' (ibid., p. 24). The 'duration' that an exercise of mental labour involves (the 'duration' of education or

training to be also considered here), and its 'intensity' (i.e. its qualitative difference from manual labour) are hard to determine in terms of labour-time of ordinary labour; and any fixation of set grades implies an arbitrary decision. On the other hand, the gradations cannot be left to supply-and-demand factors, since, then, the number of intellectuals and mental workers being limited, their salaries or wages would naturally have a rent-element built into them, and a 'privileged group' would immediately form (cf. Lange, *Economic Theory of Socialism*, p. 102 note). While it will be wrong to put in one category all kinds of 'mental labour', from that of a school-teacher and supervisory technician to that of the factory manager and administrative bureaucrat, the fact remains that the higher ranks of intellectuals socially merge with those of the higher administrative and managerial personnel. Under socialism the contradiction between manual and mental labour does not remain confined to a conflict of interest over shares in the wages fund; it merges into the contradiction between the proletariat and the state-apparatus. In such circumstances, it is hard to accept Stalin's view that the contradiction between manual and mental labour is a characteristic feature of capitalism and 'has disappeared in our present socialist system', a statement made on the basis of no deeper analysis than the finding, ex-cathedra, that since there was no longer any capitalist exploitation, 'today, the physical workers and the managerial personnel are not enemies, but comrades and friends, members of a single collective body of producers' (*Problems of Socialism*, p. 31). He, however, admitted that this was a 'distinction', which needed to be eliminated, mainly by raising 'the cultural and technical level of the workers' (pp. 32-33).

As we have seen, there are firm economic and social grounds for the contradiction between manual and mental labour under socialism, even if one disregards the very powerful bourgeois (and pre-bourgeois) cultural and ideological heritage of the intelligentsia within socialist societies. Lenin was later on to emphasize repeatedly the latter problem, but in 1917, he also considered it essential that an egalitarian system be introduced in wage-payments to bring 'officials' to the same level as workers—

'All officials, without exception, elected and subject to recall at any time, their salaries reduced to the level of ordinary workmen's wages' ('State and Revolution', *Selected Works*, II, p. 170).

Such a concept proved unworkable in practice, not the least because Lenin's notion that any 'literate person' could carry out any function of government, since such functions 'can be reduced to simple operations of registration, filing and checking' was surely premature, to say the least. There is no doubt that if a socialist economy wishes to make full use of its intelligentsia it has to reward its members for work distinctly above the levels of manual labour of corresponding duration. Restraint

must of course, be exercised in promoting such wage-differentiation, for, as we have seen, any 'rent' element in the wages of the intelligentsia or concealed privileges have to be avoided.

The Chinese practice of forcing a combination of mental with manual labour, is seen as a measure of breaking the social barrier between the two kinds of labour as well as overcoming the city-country contradiction (for which below) (see, e.g., Mao Tse-tung (1967), *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed*, pp. 207-8, 235-6). Such a practice must be undertaken on a limited scale in terms of time for each individual because when undertaken on so enormous a scale as during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76, it meant a great deal of waste of scientific and intellectual talent, and ultimately led to the reverse of what it was designed to overcome: the alienation of the intellectuals and a sharper cleavage between them and the socialist regime.

There are other possible measures too. The promotion of literacy, developing and expanding school and university education, running worker-education programmes and instituting preferential access to higher education for workers' children, are some of the measures that have been commonly adopted in Socialist countries. The efficacy of these in resolving the mental-manual contradiction is considerable. But ultimately, perhaps, it is in the ideological sphere that the resolution is to be sought for. Does Marxism remain a living, challenged and challenging school of thought, attuned to reality and practice, and by internal debate helping to decide policy choices or does it become a mere theology, providing from its store of terminology and quotations, the appropriate rationalisation for any official decision? In the latter case, one can have a mercenary intelligentsia certainly, but not a revolutionary or Socialist one.

The second major contradiction under Socialism is the one between town and country, which essentially revolves round the problem of the peasantry. Here, we must first consider another modification of the assumptions on whose basis we have been discussing the functioning of a socialist system. If the peasants are allowed to be independent producers, they, of course, would not form part of the body of wage-receivers, and their aggregate income could not be determined by the State through the wage-fund as in the industrial sector. If they were pressed or persuaded into forming producer-cooperatives (collective farms, communes) they would still remain outside the national wage-system, though their income could conceivably be determined with better approximation by the State. It is only if they became wage-workers in State farms, that is, ceased to be peasants, that their separate economic status would end. Engels, who reflected on this question as early as 1847, thought that 'the antagonism between town and country' would disappear when the peasant, through education and 'all-around [cultural] development', broke the bonds of the age-old 'division of labour' (which kept the peasants apart from industrial

workers) and thereby achieved full mobility between town and country. The 'two different classes' of workers and peasants would then become one ('Principles of Communism', in Marx-Engels-Lenin, *On Communist Society*, Moscow, 1978, 19; cf. also *Anti-Duhring*, pp. 434 ff). The cultural divide would also be bridged, and in *Anti-Duhring*, Engels gave an ecological colour as well to the elimination of this contradiction:

✓ 'The present poisoning of the air, water and land can only be put an end to by the fusion of town and country . . .' (p. 441).

Stalin argued that in Socialism this contradiction no longer remained, though 'the distinction' persisted. This was because between workers and peasants there was no longer any divergence of interest. 'On the contrary, their interests lie along a common line . . .' (*Problems of Socialism*, p. 30). But the 'identity of interest' was by no means characteristic of Soviet socialist construction. If in 1924 Preobrazhensky had been rather tactless in insisting that there had to be 'primitive socialist accumulation' at the cost of 'small-scale production' of the peasant (E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Penguin Books, 1970, Vol.I, p. 220), then, as we have seen, Stalin too admitted in 1928 that the peasants had been put under something of a 'tribute' for Socialist industrial construction (*Works*, XI, p. 197). The 'tribute' intensified after 1928 with the drive for collectivization under which the elimination of kulaks and the annexation of their lands to the collective farms, could be read as measures designed to obtain acceptance of the new system by the middle and poor peasants though the system itself was promoted to pump marketable, as well as hitherto non-marketed, surplus from the countryside (Cf. M. Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development since 1917*, London, 1951, pp. 208-29; for a less sympathetic, but detailed study, see M. Levin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power, a Study of Collectivization*, London, 1968). The tribute was the more heavily felt, since the way collective farming was imposed resulted in enormous wastage of assets, notably, horses, all characteristically attributed to sabotage by the kulaks (Dobb, op. cit., p. 246. On p. 229, drawing a balance-sheet of collectivization, ✓ Dobb admits: 'The birth pangs were sharp, the mid-wifery rough'). It is hard now to disagree with Mao Tse-tung's criticism (made as early as 1956) that 'the Soviet Union has adopted measures which squeeze the peasants very hard. It takes away too much from the peasants at too low a price through its system of so-called obligatory sales' ('Ten Major Relationships', *Selected Works*, VI, p. 291). The Chinese Revolution, which was essentially a peasant revolution in its new-democratic stage, indicated the possibility of a different approach to the peasantry altogether. Here the construction of the agricultural cooperatives and then the People's Communes during the 1950s occurred through internal peasant upsurges, with considerable care exercised in

both restricting and accommodating the 'rich peasant' (and even the ex-landlord), so that the waste in assets was kept to the minimum. The Great Leap Forward, 1958-60, despite the difficulties it faced, had this valid essential principle that by letting the communes accumulate capital to start 'back-yard' industries, it kept part of the savings of the Communes for rural industrial investment. In the Cultural Revolution there came a forced rural shift of social services and industry to the countryside (on shift of medical services see *Mao Tsetung Unrehearsed*, pp. 232-3). The urban population was reduced from 24.7% of the total in 1960 to 17.4% in 1970 (G.E. Ebanks and Chaoze Chang, *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 5 (3), p. 32). It thus seemed as if the Chinese were fulfilling Engels's admonition to take industry away from the great cities (*Anti-Duhring*, p. 441; cf. Mao Tsetung, *Critique of Soviet Economics*, p. 102). Clearly, one of the great strengths of the Chinese Communist Party has been its ability to maintain a proper balance between town and country and look after the interests of the peasantry, while trying to accumulate capital for industry. It is not, however, clear if this success (its last phase being the redistribution of commune land among peasants under the Production Responsibility System begun in 1978) can be as well sustained under the present surge of 'Commodity Socialism'.

There is a third important contradiction, an external one for each socialist economy: contradictions with other socialist nations. But consideration of this will take us very far from our present study; and I do not also believe that socialism in USSR came to an end principally because of a 'revolt of nations'. The national conflicts seem to have been a consequence rather than a cause of the socialist break-down. ③

The constant resolution of the internal contradictions of Socialism we have been discussing can probably occur only through a kind of Uninterrupted Revolution, a movement in waves, out of a process of trial-and-error on a historical scale. It is true that in a socialist society, since there is no class-exploitation, there should in theory be no class struggle. But in practice, with the enlargement of the bureaucratic apparatus and the 'privileged stratum', there still remains ground for a New Class, a potential néo-bourgeoisie, to arise. When such a situation occurs, the contradictions (a) between the proletariat and the State, (b) between mental and manual labour, and (c) between town and country, may all take up the character of separate or multi-faceted class-struggles. Even when the Soviet Communist Party went on saying that in the 'State of the Whole People' there could be no class struggle, the constant effort of the privileged strata to transform the USSR into a group of capitalist 'free-enterprise' countries was nothing short of a class-offensive against an ideologically disarmed and economically 'alienated' proletariat. The successfully contrived capitalist restorations have shown that it was not correct to insist that Socialism once established //

✓ would necessarily be free of class-struggles. The point to emphasize, however, is, as the historical experience of the socialist regimes so clearly teaches us; that the straggle has to be conducted, from the side of the socialist forces, not by a blind (often hugely counter-productive) use of police methods, but essentially by ideological persuasion and popular mobilization. This does not, of course, mean that faced with what Marx called a 'Slave-owners' rebellion', the socialist state // should forget how to use force.

The march to the goal of a state of equality and abundance of goods is still the only possible goal for mankind, a vision shown to be ✓ realisable by the continuous expansion of production ever since the Industrial Revolution. Socialism is Humanity's first conscious step in 'the ascent from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom' of which both Marx and Engels spoke. The present collapse of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe is an undoubted setback, a great ebb of the tide. What the collapse has exposed to the eye has removed several of our illusions, but also retold us several essential truths. This should be of help to us in the rallying of forces, once again, against world capitalism and in the global revival and reinforcement of the // struggle for socialism—for 'the realm of freedom' beckons to us brighter than ever.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It is important, however, to recognise that in his essay Lange carefully avoided any discussion in terms of the Labour theory of Value, so that we should rather reframe the equation as  $C=V[=L]$  to suit his position in the essay in question.

C.P. BHAMBHRI\*

## *Cohesion, Conflicts and Contradictions within the Indian State*

The collapse of Soviet Russia and the East European Socialist state-systems and many developments within India demand a close investigation about the premises of the modern state systems. It has been maintained that legitimacy and ideological hegemony are essential for the maintenance of the state-systems. The modern states in the capitalist countries have evolved institutional arrangements for governance which are sustained and renewed by democratic mechanisms of legitimacy and ideological hegemony of capitalism. The critics in the western countries are expressing their concern about the weakening of democratic legitimacy because of lack of popular participation of the voters in elections.

Carole Jean Uplander in 'Electoral Participation: Summing up a Decade' observes:

'Participation in American elections has declined over the last thirty years. Form a twentieth-century peak of 62.8 per cent in 1960, turnout in presidential elections fell to 52.6 per cent in 1980. Although this long-term decline reversed slightly in 1984, it then continued, with just 50.15 per cent of the voting age population voting in 1988. The net effect has been that in the decade of the eighties voting participation appears to have slid to a low plateau, but may not have bottomed out'.<sup>1</sup>

The defenders of the western capitalist state-systems have suggested that instead of ideological hegemony, the western societies have witnessed social transformations leading to the 'end of ideology' (Daniel Bell). The old social divisions and cleavages in the western societies have been replaced by the convergence of interests which is reflected in the politics of consensus among major political formations of these societies. This development has made state-systems quite cohesive internally and mechanisms of conflict resolution are effective

---

\* Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



because of strong institutions of the state-systems. It has led some Marxists like *Poulantzas* and *Offe* to characterise capitalist democratic states as 'relatively autonomous' and 'class struggle states' because the working class has access to it and it can struggle for its interests. Such a struggle has to be based on political and democratic action within the capitalist states. While the western Marxists are modifying their theory on class struggle, the defenders see a lot of resilience in the western democratic state-systems for managing societal conflicts. Gabriel A. Almond observes:

'Democratic welfare capitalism produces the reconciliation of opposing and complementary elements which make possible the survival, even enhancement of both of these sets of institutions. It is not a static accommodations, but rather one which fluctuates over time, with capitalism being compromised by the tax-transfer-regulatory action of the state at one point, and then correcting in the direction of the reduction of the intervention of the state at another point, and with a learning process over time this may reduce the amplitude of the curves'.<sup>2</sup>

The state-systems in the western capitalist societies claim cohesion within the state and its capabilities to manage social conflicts because of evolved institutional arrangements for governance. Many factors have facilitated the stabilization of the western state-systems during the last four decades of the twentieth century. Social contradictions and political upheavels are not unknown to the European and North-American state systems during the last three centuries, but the stage of stabilized state-systems has arrived because of inner coherence which is linked with the decline of divisive ideologies and the emergence of pre-eminent ideology of democratic welfare capitalism and consensual politics. The logic of defenders of the western capitalist state-systems is based on an understanding of the state on the basis of its role, capabilities and legitimacy and the explanations follow from the success of their democratic welfare capitalist state-systems. In their understanding, social contradictions of an antagonistic nature leading to class struggles and class wars are non-existing in the contemporary capitalist societies and the success of their state-systems lie in their cohesion and capacity to resolve social conflicts. Thus understanding and explanations of the western capitalist state-systems are inter-linked by linking democracy and capitalism.

If such an approach is adopted to the understanding of the Indian state, qualitatively different kind of situation will have to be analysed because of the historical context of the Indian state. What is the level of cohesion within the Indian state? What is the level of legitimacy and ideological hegemony enjoyed by the Indian state? What is the level of homogeneity of the Indian ruling classes? What is the level of integration among the institutions of the State?

The level of coherence within the Indian state is functionally minimal and India is involved in an ongoing struggle to establish effective coherence within the institutions of the state. Such a coherence can be achieved if the state institutions and functionaries are united under a common ideology or under the philosophy of common public and social goals. At a generalized level, the Indian state institutions and functionaries operate at a level of coherence because of their broad commitment to the social goals of capitalist modernisation of India. Political representative, permanent bureaucracy, judiciary, army and the ruling classes operate in the context of democracy, federalism, state activism, secularism and capitalist developmentalism. The ruling classes also operate within the state because democracy, federalism, secularism and institutions of the state have facilitated the growth of capitalism and the appropriation of the surplus value by the exploiting classes. This has given civil and trade union rights to the working classes and these classes on the basis of these rights have found representation in the state mechanisms of conflict resolution. The other face of the reality is that the coherence within the state is faced by conflicts within the state. The secularists versus communalists, the democrats versus social authoritarians, the techno-capitalist classes versus the agro-capitalist classes, the regionalists versus the defenders of national market are involved in a perpetual conflict within the state. It is not without reason that a large number of exbureaucrats have joined the BJP and while part of state bureaucracy they were happily operating secular state-system. It is not surprising that in India's all violent regional movements in Punjab, or Assam, or Kashmir or Tamil Nadu got an active or passive support of the state functionaries of India in spite of the fact that they were part of an all-India state system. The power-bloc of the exploiting classes has limited homogeneity on the issue of appropriation of surplus value and beyond this their heterogeneity is reflected within the Indian state system. The reference to the western capitalist state system and its homogeneity is based on the market homogeneity of the capitalist societies. Such a market homogeneity of the capitalist market does not exist in India and its heterogeneity is reflected in fragmentation of Indian social classes. Such a fragmentation makes cohesion of the Indian state quite vulnerable to multiple conflicting and contradictory pressures of the dominant social classes. The domestic linkages among the economic sectors and social classes of India are emerging but they are quite fragile. P. Venkatramiah observes:

Establishment of global linkages should be preceded by strengthening the *linkages* . . . . Unless a certain level of homogeneity is achieved within the domestic economy, markets

cannot be widened and costs cannot be cut down by mass production and the benefits of externalities cannot be reaped'.<sup>3</sup>

The Indian economy has yet to establish strong linkages between agriculture and industry, small scale and large scale industry; towns, urban metropolis and village economies and among the regions of India. It is only such a level of homogeneity of the Indian market can lead to an internal integration of the Indian economy. Such structural weaknesses of the Indian economy have a direct relevance for the minimum level of coherence within the Indian state. If the Indian market suffers from serious regional imbalances, the Indian state will be involved in serious regional disputes and the state will operate under contradictory pulls and pressures of competing regions and classes of the regions. Regional competition in India is also class-based and all regional movements have specific regional class character. The all-India ruling classes and the all-India state has to grapple with the demands of the regions and classes of the regions which always lead regional demands.

This brings out clearly that *intermediate* levels of society in India are not fully integrated in the modern capitalist state of India. While the all-India state legitimises its actions through democracy and legality, the intermediate levels of state and society are hegemonised through feudal and semi-feudal methods of social oppression and authoritarianism. It is not without reason that in large number of Indian states, rural hegemony is established through social coercion, oppression and by negating state legality. While the all-India state operates the system of modern legality through public bureaucracy and judiciary, the rural rich in large parts of India impose their traditional power through social oppression and repression of the rural poor. Thus the all-India state breaks up as it reaches intermediate levels of the Indian society where states within a state operate under the nexus of political leaders, local bureaucracy and the rule of the exploiting classes. Thus modernity of the Indian state is challenged by the traditions of social authoritarian classes who operate states within a state. Thus an all-India state or an all-India bureaucracy or an all-India judicial and legal system operates at a low level of coherence and internal unity and it is confronted with serious challenges at social and regional levels.

The concept of states within a state is not practised only by the rural oligarchy in large parts of India, it is also practised by believers of religion in India. The Golden Temple at Amritsar was taken over by practitioners of politics of bullet of the sections of Sikh community under the leadership of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The 'Blue Star' operation of 1984 by the Indian State was delegitimised by the leadership of the Sikh community because they did not accept that the Indian State had any right to deal with criminals who had taken

sanctuary in the Golden Temple. Even if the temple has ceased to be a temple, the Indian State had no right to send its army to deal with the sheltered criminals in the temple. The high priests of the Sikh community ex-communicated the elected Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala because he had ordered the police to enter the Golden Temple to arrest the sheltered criminals. The Chief Minister Barnala was punished for upholding the right of the state to arrest the criminals by the upholders of the sanctity of the Golden Temple. The Black Thunder Operation again proved that the Golden Temple had ceased to be a sacred temple but the Indian State was defeated and the defenders of the Indian State were legitimised. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of the BJP has openly declared that legality of the Indian state cannot decide the historical truth of Mosque-Temple controversy. The religious sentiment of the people is decisive in these matters and not the rule of law of democratic state of India. The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid has openly used the Friday prayers for political reasons and the place from where he issues *Fatwas* to the Muslims to vote for a political party during the elections. Thus the Golden Temple, the Ram Janmabhoomi and the Jama Masjid of Delhi are states within a state and secular state with democratic legitimacy has been challenged by those who claim to defend religion and sanctity of the religious places. Every ideology of a state has a cultural dimension but the Indian culture is linked strongly with religion. The cohesion within the secular state is broken by contestants who lay claim to religious legitimacy.

Indian society is witnessing multiple contests and all contests are fought within the Indian state. Indian State has itself initiated many social contests because it is a *transformational* state. But some contests within India are directed against the state with a view to change the ideology of the state. Secularism versus communalism is one such fundamental contest in India and communal challenge is directed against the secular character of the state. Similarly, rural oligarchs who are practitioners of social authoritarianism are challenging the democratic legality of the state in India. Thus the fragility of the contemporary Indian state is observable in many essential areas of Indian social life. The strength and weaknesses of the Indian state may be recapitulated here for understanding the level of coherence and the prevalence of conflicts within the Indian State. (a) The Indian state has shown great internal coherence and capability to defend the territorial integrity of India. It has successfully launched the mechanisms of democratic participation of all adults of the country. The inherited contradictions of the backward and distorted colonial economy were destroyed by the Indian state by launching a system of planned economic development of India. The Indian state has taken many steps during the last four decades for the democratic reconstruction of society and the most significant and conflict ridden

democratic steps were for the linguistic reorganization of the states of India and the reform of Hindu Personal Law. As Sartori observes:

'... that democracy as a principle of legitimacy is one thing, actual democratization is quite another'.<sup>4</sup>

The Indian state has maintained and preserved unity in diversity by creating unifying institutions and by according equal respect to all linguistic and cultural social groups in society. An extremely heterogeneous society has achieved a level of integration through democratic mechanisms which has allowed regional assertions and pressures to co-exist with an all-India integrative process of social formation of a modern Indian state. The western writers have explained it due to 'elite consensus' in society. Arend Lijphart observes:

'In a consociational democracy, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a plural society are counteracted by the cooperative attitudes and behaviour of the leaders of the different segments of the population. Elite cooperation is the primary distinguishing feature of consociational democracy...'.<sup>5</sup>

Rajni Kothari and Morris-Jones attribute the success of the Indian state in showing coherence of social goals because of the Grand Coalition of the Congress Party system and the leadership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

A little further probing will have to be done in the social dynamics of India to appreciate the level of coherence within the Indian state and its capacity to achieve social goals of national unity, economic development and democratic reforms of the Indian society. Every society has mechanisms of internal regulation to maintain coherence and achieve social stability. On the eve of Independence, India inherited some very strong structures of social authoritarianism for regulation of social conduct. Many traditional structures of authority were structurally linked with feudal and semi-feudal land relations and social attitudes of obedience to social authority of high castes and subordination of the suppressed classes and castes. Social authoritarianism co-existed with politically democratic state and the new authority arrangements of the state coopted the existing traditional socially authoritarian arrangements of social regulation. The last four decades of democratic process and social reforms initiated by the Indian state have brought new self-assertion to the traditionally dominated sections of society and the traditional dominant castes and classes are very reluctant to accept the loss of their social authority. Thus the Indian state is involved in serious conflicts which have emerged because of democratic process and the intransigence of the traditional dominant castes and classes. Thus social conflicts which appear in the name of caste are fundamental assertions of the poor against the entrenched castes. The dominant

castes or the emerging 'other backward castes' are quite close to the institutions of the state and state functionaries suffer from caste biases and caste prejudices. The deprived strata of society also look towards the state for protection against caste oppression. The internal coherence of the Indian state has been weakened because while castes are unequal in power, they are competing within the Indian state either for promotion of interests (exploiting castes) or for protection of life (oppressed castes).

If on the one hand caste conflicts and caste competitiveness has weakened the cohesiveness of the state in dealing with citizens on the basis of equality, on the other, competitive communalism based on alternative concepts of Indian nationalism are posing a serious challenge to the practice of secularism by the Indian state. The Indian state has confronted the challenge of communalism because within the Indian state a level of unity existed on the idea of secularism which was based on multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural nationalism of India. The state leadership the institutional arrangement of governance was not formally but concretely committed to the plural views of values of Indian secular social life. A fundamental challenge to secular state has come from the believers of religion-based politics in India and the Indian state has shown serious weaknesses in meeting the challenge of forces represented by the believers of religion-based politics. Such forces have entered the state institutions and an internal division is taking place in the institutions of the Indian state. Both the secularists and the believers of religion-based politics are competing within the state for political power and every institution of the state is involved in this internal divide between the secularists and the communalists.

The legitimising institutions of the Indian state are also witnessing competition and cleavages on the basis of castes and communities. Thus the governing and the legitimising institutions of the state are losing ideological coherence and they are witnessing internal conflicts and cleavages on the basis of ideologies and social goals of the state. It is not only the state institutions i.e. both governing and legitimising are involved in internal conflicts and divisions, the ruling classes are also involved in conflict on the broad goals of Indian state.

The explanation for the growing weaknesses of the internal coherence of the Indian state is not only in the heterogeneity of the Indian state, it lies in the growing ideological conflict in Indian society and this ideological conflict has penetrated the governing and legitimising institutions of the Indian state. This explanation is derived from the 'Transitional' epoch in which the contemporary Indian state is operating with its goals of democracy, federalism, secularism, and capitalist transformation: heterogeneity of India is an empirical reality but 'Transitional epoch' is qualitative perspective for the understanding of the Indian state. The ongoing capitalist

transformation of India is under challenge from the feudal, semi-feudal and landlord views of social life based on religion and caste authority. While there is no pure model of capitalist transformation, the principle of democratic equality and democratic rights is not in tune with religion-based or caste-based power and privileges. Caste assertions and religious assertions have challenged the modernisation enterprise of the Indian state and since the strength of these challenges has grown, the Indian state is involved in a struggle for moving forward by defeating the forces which want India to go backward. In this struggle of the state, it lacks internal unity of purpose and commitment based on internal capability to achieve its defined social goals. Thus the Indian state is contesting and within the state its own functionaries are ideologically divided and factionalised.

The transitional epoch is characterised by mutually competing and opposite ideologies and the Indian state is witnessing competition within itself. Another factor which has obstructed the growth of coherence within the state institutions is competitiveness among the state functionaries for the exercise of power. Politicians versus bureaucrats, bureaucrats versus bureaucrats or judges versus politicians are many a time involved in mutual conflicts because of notions of power. All state functionaries in India are working for the system based on 'private property'. This has achieved coherence among the politicians, the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the military. The legitimisation institutions of the state are also committed to a social system based on 'private property'. While at one level, the state functionaries operate at a level of coherence, at another level, they are involved in a ruthless competition for power. The exercise of power has become a motivating factor for the state functionaries and they compete against one another for more powers. The disputes between civil and military bureaucracy are based on the concept of power. An internal struggle for power is the essence of the inside stories of conflicts among the state functionaries. To sum up, coherence and conflicts within the Indian state has to be explained on the basis of ideology and concept of power of the state functionaries. While ideological disputes in the Indian society have sharply divided the internal structures of Indian state-system, the pursuit of power has created inter-institutional and intra-institutional conflicts within the Indian state. The Indian state is operating in the overall context of 'Transitional Epoch' and its impact is felt on the functioning of the state institutions. In this epoch, fundamental issues divide society fundamentally. And the Indian state operates under the pulls and pressures of contradictory ideologies and sharp divisions of society are reflected within the state.

Another important factor which exercises direct influence on the working of the Indian state is the role of imperialism, neo-colonialism

and global integration of India with advanced capitalist economies. India has domestic social contradictions and the Indian state is involved in managing social contradictions. The Indian state has to make multiple class responses to class contradictions of the Indian society. But the whole Indian society is in contradiction with imperialism because economically dominant countries have a single goal of exploiting the whole society. The Indian state had a social consensus when it operated a relatively self-reliant political economy and it bargained with imperialism. India had never accepted autarchy or isolation in world economic arrangements but it pursued its goals by bargaining with imperialism and it emphasised the goals of self-reliance. Such a national consensus is slowly getting eroded because of the new economic policies of the Indian state. The external factor is likely to create serious cleavages in Indian social life and the Indian state will be exposed to external and internal pressures on its new economic policies. If the external state-systems are able to dominate over the Indian state system because of new economic policies, the domestic capabilities of the Indian state will become weak. An already weak state-system will be burdened by expanding external pressures. The essence of the argument is that the Indian-state system has become vulnerable because of growing ideological divisions within India and the external factor may further accentuate ideological divisions within the country.

The above discussion clearly reveals that the Indian state is not only 'weak', it does not have minimum internal cohesion and capabilities to achieve its stated social goals. It is pertinent here to 'elaborate' a little the rich arguments advanced by Prabhat Patnaik in 'A Note on the Political Economy of the 'Retreat of the State' (*Social Scientist*, No. 234, pp. 44-57). One important argument of Patnaik that under the IMF, World Bank dictates, the 'relatively 'autonomous', blatantly not 'partisan' states which never officially made national interests identical with 'the interests of any particular social class', will lose all these essential features of relatively self-reliant capitalist development in order to satisfy the 'conditionalities' of the IMF and the World Bank. Further, the domestic monopoly capitalists in India would also build up the pressure against state intervention in economy and programmes of social welfare. Since such a change of regime will generate serious social cleavages and to deal with social upheavals, the 'retreating state' will become 'more authoritarian'. This argument of Patnaik is correct and his warnings about the emergence of an authoritarian state in India under the new policy regime of the IMF and the World Bank should be seriously noted by political formations which stand for democratic politics for the promotion and protection of the labouring and exploited classes of India.



Patnaik has not looked into some other possibilities which are as realistic as the possibility of the emergence of an authoritarian state. The Indian state has every administrative apparatus to respond in an authoritarian manner to deal with emerging social challenge but its administrative instruments suffer from serious internal cleavages and fragmentation. Can such state apparatus implement necessary policies to safeguard the programmes of the authoritarian state in India. Under normal circumstances, it is the duty of the state to defend territorial unity and integrity of India. The secessionist and terrorist movements in Punjab, the Kashmir valley and in some parts of north-east India revealed that the various armed forces of the country failed to win over the willing cooperation and support of the terrorised, innocent and patriotic citizens in their fight against terrorism. Terrorism cannot be fought if the local people are alienated from the instruments of the state. The local people willingly support the anti-insurgency role of the armed forces, if they have a genuine feeling that the instruments of the state are people-friendly and anti-terrorists. Many serious acts of omission and commission were committed by the armed forces in their anti-insurgency operations that the local people come to equate terrorists with state terrorism in India. This illustration shows that the Indian state lacks proper instruments to implement and enforce the goals of authoritarianism. The state apparatus in India suffers from serious cleavages and all its policies in the process of implementation get distorted. Under such a situation, emergence of social discontent leads to anarchic social disorder. India may witness ad hoc social outbursts on a large scale and a phenomenon of helpless state to maintain even 'law and order' in the country. During the last forty five years, the Indian state succeeded in tackling communal, terrorist and secessionist challenges because of its some welfare programmes, the absolute majority of Indians never came on the streets to fight street battles. The legitimacy of the Indian state, while it was weak, largely depended on its interventionist role in the form of some employment guarantee schemes, 'Integrated Rural Development Programmes, Jawahar Rozgar Yojna etc. The Indian state while subsidising the rich strata of society, also extended some subsidies to the poor in the form of 'food for work programmes' and mid-day meals for the school-going children of the poor. The 'retreating state' under the dictates of the IMF-World Bank and the domestic monopoly capitalist classes will have to abandon some of its essential 'pro-poor welfare schemes' in the process, it will lay down the foundations of serious social disorder. The dimensions of emerging social disorder cannot be accurately predicted but it may take the form of communal disorder, or inter-regional warfare or secessionism or directionless lumpenised rioting. The Indian state as it is constituted today is not capable of handling multiplicity of socially disturbed situations in the whole of India. A question worth probing is: will

India remain integrated if social disorder spreads on account of new path of economic development?

Further, the Indian state is not fully 'formed state'. The process of state formation in India has to grapple with many issues of ideology, civil society, democratic legitimacy and the relationship of the state with many strata of society. Many factors are at work which intervene in the formation of social consciousness in India and caste, communal and regional feelings are a significant factor in Indian society. Hence the political economy of the state and the anatomy of civil society is in serious 'disequilibrium' because of transition 'in the mode of production of material life conditions' in India. In such a transitional stage when the processes of class formation and state formation at work, the global pressure over India has increased to determine the path of our development. There is absolutely no reason to believe that the Indian state will be able to manage deep social crisis through 'authoritarian' interventions. A weak and deformed state in its inability to manage serious crisis can lead to social anarchy or even disintegration of the country. Hence Patnaik identifies one possibility, while many other equally disturbing possibilities generated by a 'retreating state' should not be ignored. Balkanisation of India or aimless social bloodshed are equally plausible because the Indian state does not have a strong guiding ideology which is accepted by all its functionaries. The colonial state in India had ideologically hegemonised its functionaries who defended colonial interests with ruthlessness. Even a police state needs its 'executive agencies' which are ready to stand by its ideology. The Indian state is weak and internally fragmented by its own functionaries which are not committed to enthusiastically defend its goals.

#### NOTED AND REFERENCES

1. (*Society*: July/August 1991, p. 35).
2. Gabriel A. Almond: '*Capitalism and Democracy*': Political Science and Politics: September 1991: p. 473.
3. '*Prospects for Industrial Growth*': The Economic Times, Delhi, January 30, 1992, p. 12.
4. Giovanni Sartori: 'Rethinking democracy: bad polity and bad politics' *International Social Science Journal*: August 1991, No. 129, p. 447. Also see: Giovanni Sartori: *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*: Chatham, N.J. Chatham House, 1987.
5. Arend Lijphart: *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1989: p. 1.

MODHUMITA ROY\*

## *The Englishing of India: Class Formation and Social Privilege*

All school children in Bengal know the story of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the nineteenth-century educator and social reformer, who learnt his English numerals at the age of eight. The story is told to us as a morality tale about perseverance and industry and about the role of education in self-improvement. Vidyasagar, accompanied by his father, was walking to Calcutta in November 1828, to be enrolled in a school. Legend has it that as he passed each milestone he memorized the numeral so that by the time he reached Calcutta he had learnt them. Two facts need to be emphasized about this story. Firstly, that the milestones were marked in English and, relatedly, Vidyasagar's eagerness to learn the English numerals. 'In a way perhaps,' comments Asok Sen, 'the milestones on Iswar Chandra's road to Calcutta had the significance of foretelling the end in the beginning. A boy of uncommon talents could use them for his first lesson in 'English numerals.' However, the milestones were so engraved in 'English' to suit the convenience and sanctions of a new empire under foreign domination.'<sup>1</sup>

Vidyasagar was not a native of Calcutta. Born in Birsingha (then part of the Hugly district of West Bengal) to a rural Brahmin family of traditional pandits, he was a member of the lower middle class. Poverty had forced his father, Thakurdas, to give up his *panditva*, to move to Calcutta to seek employment as a clerk in a business house. Now, accompanied by him, Iswar Chandra was travelling to the city to try and enroll in a school where he would receive a good education (which included learning English) and escape grinding poverty. Although it was his father's ambition to see his son eventually ensconced in his own *tol* or *chatuspathi* (traditional indigenous schools), Vidyasagar, between 1841 and 1858, served in several government institutions, including the Fort William College.<sup>2</sup> The story is emblematic of the socio-political circumstances of Bengal at that time in particular, but of British India in general. Foreign rule had made it

---

\* Department of English, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155

imperative for vast numbers of people to be educated in English (or at least to be conversant in it), to engage in radically different occupations from their traditional class/caste ones, and to migrate to cities in the hope of English education and employment.

English studies in India (as distinct from English *literary* studies) follows the uneven trajectory of the formation of an urban middle-class and the reconstitution and rise of an indigenous elite, the comprador-landlord element which surfaced prominently in the socio-economic scene during the post-Palashi (Plassey) years. As Asok Sen's comment indicates, the introduction of English was primarily for the benefit and consolidation of British power but it also afforded distinct opportunities for certain sections of the Indian population. The history of English studies, therefore, needs to be situated within the interlocking histories of England and India. This history is inflected and informed by the social and economic aspirations of the emerging middle class and the urban elites as well as the contingencies of a rapidly expanding empire. The institution of English as the official language of British India was the product of a complex history that cannot be reduced to the currently fashionable story that sees the imposition of English simply as a British strategy for counteracting the rebellious actions of Indians.

Gauri Viswanathan, for example, in her much cited book *Masks of Conquest* charts this history on the grid of domination and consent. In her introduction Viswanathan makes it clear that her analysis 'draws upon the illuminating insight of Antonio Gramsci, . . . that cultural domination works by consent and can (and often does) precede conquest by force.'<sup>3</sup> Turning to the specific case of India, Viswanathan suggests that 'consent' was created before political conquest, and that the British preferred 'voluntary cultural assimilation as the most effective form of political control.' English literary studies, according to Viswanathan was 'an instrument of discipline and management,' to counteract the possibility of 'imminent rebellion and resistance.' It is her contention that 'the introduction of English represented an embattled response to historical and political pressures'; that the curriculum may be viewed as a 'defensive mechanism of control' against indigenous rebellion on the one hand, and as a way to ease the tensions among the various internecine rivalries of interests: between the East India Company, the English Parliament, the free-traders and the Indian elite.<sup>4</sup> This view, which has gained wide currency, ignores several important facts.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, English as the official language of British India was introduced *after* much of the territory that came under British suzerainty had already been consolidated via military conquest, and by a network of treaties and alliances between the East India Company and various ruling regimes (including the caste zamindari element). Secondly, the importance of English (and not an English literary syllabus) among certain sections of the Indian

population, who were less concerned with British *culture* and more with simply seeking employment, predates the institution of any specific literary curriculum. Thirdly, the educated classes remained bitterly divided over the efficacy of 'Western' ideas. While a few surely began to emulate the British in dress, speech and social custom, and some welcomed the language as a 'window on the world' and therefore advocated the teaching of English, many remained obdurately opposed to it, colluding with conservatism and revivalism of the most destructive sort. Whether 'the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the discipline of ethical thinking' contributed to the construction of consent remains highly suggestive and can only be substantiated by a study of the population that purportedly consented. In a sub-continent marked by massive illiteracy, the idea of social control through education—and English literary study, at that—is a puzzling enough proposition. But the assertion that an English *literary* curriculum 'disciplined' the Indians needs to be seriously questioned. This paper recounts, schematically, to be sure, the ways in which English education took root in India and became synonymous with power, status, privilege and the means to upward mobility. The persistence of the importance of English in contemporary India can only be explained through the story of its early rooting in the very fabric of colonial life. I have attempted, therefore, to chart some of the pressures within the historical process that consolidated the *formation of English studies* in British India. I do not presume to elaborate fully the complex range of constitutive social, political and economic relations that intersected in the process. Rather, my aim is to present a limited and condensed analysis of the grid of political and economic coordinates along which the institution of English may be mapped.

\* \* \*

British presence in India was formalised on December 31, 1600, with the granting of trade monopoly to the East India Company by Queen Elizabeth I. By 1615, the Company had four trading posts, and by 1647, the number of factories increased to twenty-three. Although initially the Company was one of many rival European powers in India, by the middle of the eighteenth century, with its victory at Palashi in 1757, with the conclusion of the Third Anglo-French War in 1763, and finally with the granting of the Diwani by Emperor Alam Shah in 1765, British presence in India was radically transformed. It became the virtual master of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, declaring its willingness 'to stand forth as Diwan' and, by the agency of the Company servants, 'to take upon themselves the entire management of revenues.'<sup>6</sup> The settlements of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta grew to be important centres of trade and commerce and cultural interaction as

well. Under the Regulating Act of 1773 Calcutta was established as the seat of the Company's central government—and remained so until 1912.

This change from a mercantile power to a revenue collecting agency was of great moment. The Company was now to be responsible for assessment and collection of land revenue and gradually it came to be responsible for the maintenance of law and order as well. Persian was still, in this period, the language of business and administration, and both Muslim and Hindu legal systems were followed in the law courts. 'For most of the English officers sent out to the districts,' observes Ranajit Guha, 'it was a journey into the unknown in more than one sense.'<sup>17</sup> They knew little, if anything, about the intricate laws of property, or about the quasi-feudal rights and obligations that were determined by local traditions. It was within this context that the question of education (primarily the training of Company writers or clerks) first arose. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General from 1774 to 1785, was faced with the task of organizing an extensive bureaucracy. (Until 1832, when a separate board of revenue and courts was established at Allahabad, the jurisdiction of the Bengal Presidency extended as far as Delhi and Nagpur.) Therefore, it was of utmost importance that the Company servants learn Indian languages in order to carry out the work of assessing and collecting revenues and adjudicating land disputes. Hastings had little choice but to create an 'orientalized' service elite competent in Indian languages, traditions and customs. This decision was prompted, in part, by his genuine interest and admiration of Indian cultural heritage, but more immediately it was a consequence of urgent practical considerations of good management. The latter factor should not be underestimated. The 1780s were a period of general dislocation for British commercial and political power. Inter-continental wars in the Atlantic region and the challenge of the Marathas in India left the British position in India perilous. British political standing in Bengal in particular was still on an uncertain footing. The fear—real or imagined—that any interference in the religious and social life of the people might endanger the handful of British officials and British business interests influenced administrative policies to a considerable degree. Hastings needed to gain the confidence and affection of the people he governed. Without a sound knowledge of the customs and traditions of the population, without an understanding of the intricate and often baffling revenue laws and systems of collection this could hardly be accomplished. Therefore, Hastings worked largely through accommodating the indigenous system of government. In a letter to the Chairman of the Court of Directors, Nathaniel Smith, Hastings emphasised precisely the connection between such local knowledge and good government: 'Every accumulation of knowledge, especially such as

obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state.<sup>8</sup>

After Hastings' ignominious departure, the Company's attitude slowly evolved in a different direction. The policies of successive officials such as John Malcolm, Thomas Munro and Charles Metcalf reflected a growing confidence. British paramountcy had been effectively established, and the policy of accommodation pursued under Hastings gave way to British cultural arrogance that led the administrators to impose their language, law and ideas onto the subject population. But, the continuation of certain aspects of Hastings' orientalist policies still made good administrative sense. Wellesley, for example, was determined to train efficient and loyal administrators. He founded Fort William College in 1800 for the sole purpose of training young recruits from Britain in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and other Indian languages and in law and history. The college boasted excellent departments of Indian classical and vernacular languages and employed thirty-three Munshis who worked in conjunction with noted Orientalists such as H.T. Colebrook, John Gilchrist, Francis Gladwin and William Carey. A generalised suspicion of 'native' informants, in part, fuelled this desire to learn Indian languages and translate texts that the British officials deemed to be important. Charles Grant, in a letter to the then Governor General in 1786, expressed his deep distrust of an Indian clerk who was, in his opinion, 'endowed with greater cunning or secrecy' than anyone else and was deft at 'dividing, sub-dividing, inter-mixing, annexing, reducing, or entirely concealing portions of rent or territory . . .'.<sup>9</sup> The Serampore Mission and Fort William College gave the impetus for Bengali newspapers and translation, as off-shoots of their main purpose: to train efficient servants of the Company and to train them economically.

The Charter Act of 1813 renewed the East India Company's privilege for trade. With the renewal, Parliament included two extraordinarily important clauses, one ecclesiastical and the other educational: (1) a relaxation of controls over missionary activity in India; and (2) the assumption of a new responsibility for Indian education. Although the Charter of 1792 had specifically sought to restrict the entry of missionaries into Company territories, it would be a mistake to conclude that, therefore, all missionary activity had ceased either in Bengal or elsewhere in India.<sup>10</sup> However, the 1813 Charter gave legitimacy and renewed vigour to the missionaries' efforts and contributed in no small measure to the growing popularity of English instruction, as we shall see presently.

The education clause ostensibly made it 'not obligatory but lawful' for the Company to set aside funds for 'the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India . . . and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences

among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.<sup>11</sup> This clause (the 43rd) stated clearly England's responsibility to promote the 'interests and happiness' of the Indian people and that educational measures ought to be adopted 'as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvements.'<sup>12</sup> The Charter specifically set aside a *lac* of rupees a year to be spent on education but *only* 'out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues, and profits . . . , after defraying the expenses of the military, civil, and commercial establishments, and paying the interest of the debt.'<sup>13</sup> As the governments of the different Presidencies were reporting deficits every year, it was not until 1823 that the clause could be executed. In July of that year, ten years after the Charter Act, the General Committee of Public Instruction was established and was entrusted with the responsibility of preparing a report on the state of education in the Bengal Presidency. It is worth bearing in mind that in the interim the Company had engaged in a series of expensive wars and won them all.<sup>14</sup> By this time, as well, Fort William College, the prime site of Oriental education, had been rendered all but defunct. Haileybury College in England now trained young cadres for whom the East would become a career. For Bengal, this meant a drying up of resources to print, translate and compose texts in indigenous languages. (This is not to suggest that therefore all such activities ceased altogether, but rather to emphasize that for the British administration, there seemed little reason to promote Oriental learning.)

Once the Charter had mandated the Company's responsibility for the education of the people of India, intense debates broke out over the implementation of the mandate—debates that would only be resolved twenty-two years later with Lord Bentinck's 1835 Resolution. Although couched in grandiose moral terms, the political stakes in systematizing education in India were obviously the serious concern. Lord Bentinck, the then Governor General in Council, passed a brief resolution for the 'promotion of European literatures and science among the natives of India'.<sup>15</sup> This Minute made English the medium of instruction in government-subsidized schools and in effect made English the official language of British India.

Although English became the official language of commerce and administration only in the mid-nineteenth century, the influence of English had been felt in India long before this date. The earliest efforts to introduce English education had been the work of missionaries and private societies. As early as 1659, the Court of Directors had expressed their desire to spread the teaching of the Gospel. The Charter of 1698 specifically included a missionary clause.<sup>16</sup> The contribution of missionaries to the development of English education was probably greatest in the Madras Presidency. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Danish



Mission had set up schools there during the early eighteenth century. By the end of the century, Reverend Schwartz had established schools for teaching English at Tanjore, Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga. The Baptist Missionaries had similarly instituted various schools in Bengal 'for the dissemination of education and propagating of Christianity among the people of Bengal.'<sup>17</sup>

The missionaries had argued vociferously that English would 'be a happy means of diffusing the gospel,' which in turn would result in pacifying the 'natives.' The efficacy of English had also been acknowledged by colonial administrators from the very outset. A Despatch of the Court of Directors in 1787 noted: 'The utility and importance of establishing a free and direct communication with the natives, have been sensibly experienced during the late war,' 'their acquiring a knowledge of the English language' was deemed to be the 'the most effectual means of accomplishing this desirable object.' The Directors were 'highly approving' of projects that would 'enlighten the minds of the natives and to impress them with sentiments of esteem and respect for this British nation. . . .'<sup>18</sup>

The officials of the British East India Company too, as early as the last decades of the eighteenth century, had recognized the political potential of English for building a massive imperial structure. In 1792 Charles Grant had suggested that English should become the official language of instruction at all levels. But at the time the British position was still under considerable challenge and such a decision was deemed too dangerous. Rather, as this brief recapitulation suggests, the institution of English was a slow and gradual process. The debates over the language of instruction and subsequently the curriculum, and the victory of English over indigenous languages, bear testimony to the inextricable connection of language to power.<sup>19</sup> The decision to promote English and the study of English literature was a result of complex historical and political forces; but above all, it was prompted by the need to maintain and consolidate British supremacy, both economic and political. The desire to absorb India more thoroughly and effectively in the colonial nexus of trade and exploitation expressed itself directly in the educational policies. More than anything, the administration of the Company's territories in India required uniformity and centralization, and these were achieved, in part, through the introduction of English as the common currency of commercial, administrative, legal and intellectual intercourse. The various twists and turns the educational debate took were always and invariably inflected by financial expediency on the one hand, and the immediate and local needs of the Company, on the other. Economy and utility, the watchwords of British administration, were both achieved by introducing English as the official language.

It is also clear that although the question of the language of instruction was resolved in 1835, the centrality of English in the lives

of the upwardly mobile classes in India had grown enormously, long before Macaulay's Minute or Bentinck's resolution. In fact, Macaulay was said to have 'sowed his seeds in prepared soil.'<sup>20</sup> Bentinck's policy derived as much from Macaulay's hope of creating a native comprador class, 'a class who may be the interpreters between us and the millions we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in words, and in intellect,' as from native demands to be taught in English.<sup>21</sup> It was not just the Indian elite, who after all could afford to educate their heirs in private institutions, but all those who aspired to a middle-class existence and thus wanted—indeed needed—to learn the language, who were adamant. The exigencies of large-scale trade and production led to new forms of employment, setting in motion a degree of mobility virtually unprecedented in our history. Iswar Chandra's journey to the city is only one example of this process. Increasingly, men flocked to the cities and district towns to seek careers in association with the British.<sup>22</sup>

The first groups of Indians to learn English were 'the *Dadani* merchants through whom the Company made contacts with the native producers of calicoes and muslins. The Company needed reliable *Dobhassis* (interpreters) and *Munshis* (secretaries or scribes) to help them conduct business, and so English became the preferred means of communication and rather than a vehicle of 'enlightenment.' Sir Thomas Roe, who as ambassador to the court of Emperor Jahangir had secured extra-territorial rights for the Company, carried out his transactions with the help of interpreters. On his visit to Surat in 1626, he was attended by 'some peunes (peons) or olive coloured Indian foot-boys, who can prettily prattle English.'<sup>23</sup> By 1673, James Rennell, the Company's Surveyor-General, estimated the number of interpreters who spoke English at about a thousand in Bengal alone. *Banyans*, or brokers, who carried on business with the mercantile and banking houses, realized the advantage of learning English. With its victory at Palashi, the Company soon began to employ agents, or *gomasthas* who assisted them in a variety of ways: collecting revenues, keeping accounts, negotiating with Mughal courtiers and, in some cases, managing household affairs.<sup>24</sup> Access to these new professions was largely restricted to the upper castes and sub-castes, who traditionally were the educated class, many of whom had barely eked out a living in the villages prior to being employed by the British. With the expansion of British trade, 'educated caste Hindus in and around Calcutta, whether wealthy or not, chose occupations in newly formed British oriented institutions.'<sup>25</sup> With the Permanent Settlement (1793) and the creation of private ownership of property, litigations became common, giving rise to a new class of pleaders. The bureaucracy, agency houses and law courts offered new job opportunities. For all of these, some knowledge of English was a necessary prerequisite,

The growing popularity of English education in the first decades of the nineteenth century is borne out by the success of institutions of English instruction. Mr. and Mrs. Marshman's boarding schools, which were founded in 1800, 'became the most popular and remunerative institutions of their kind in Bengal.'<sup>26</sup> William Carey mentions twenty such schools that had been set up in and around Calcutta, and even a few in the provinces. Unlike the charitable institutions set up by the missionaries, these schools 'were looked upon simply as sources of revenue, and hence every individual in straitened circumstances—the broken down soldier, the bankrupt merchant and the ruined spendthrift—set up a day school. . .'<sup>27</sup> Carey himself advertised in 1800 from the Mission House at Serampore that in his institution, apart from the instruction that was available in languages such as Greek, Hebrew, Persian and Sanskrit, '(p)articuliar attention will be paid to correct pronunciation of the English language.'<sup>28</sup> The exorbitant rates charged, and the curriculum of studies followed by most of these institutions further point to the demand for learning English.<sup>29</sup> These institutions, which rarely survived their founders, held out for large numbers the hope of jobs as clerks, 'dobhassis,' and 'munshis' either in the offices of the East India Company, or among the emerging indigenous bourgeoisie who had business dealings with the British. Not everyone could pay the fees charged by these institutions. Nor were there enough seats to meet the growing demand. Often, the only hope of those who wished to learn English was admission to one of the few free schools of the city. According to contemporary reports it was quite usual for poor boys to run after David Hare's palanquin crying, 'Me poor boy, have pity on me, me take in your school.'<sup>30</sup>

On his arrival in Calcutta, Iswar Chandra had been advised to do the same. It was generally believed that his contemporary Ramtanu Lahiri had succeeded in gaining admission to Hare's school by running after him for two months. Ramtanu was thirteen years old at the time. This fact, the public preference, even desperation, for English education, cannot be adequately explained simply by looking through the Parliamentary debates in England. Nor was it only an expression of the British desire to hegemonize the indigenous population. The stories of Britain's reasons for instituting English as the official language and of the indigenous population's acceptance of it, despite areas of overlap, are not identical. What needs to be mapped out carefully are the circumstances that made it inevitable that English would supercede all Indian languages in importance. The question that needs to be answered is: why did the native population so readily submit to being educated in a foreign language, literature and culture? And relatedly, which segments of the population were schooled to be 'Indian in blood and colour.' For the British 'the most effective form of political control' may well have been the policy of 'voluntary cultural assimilation,' as Viswanathan argues, but that does not explain why

Indians 'volunteered'.<sup>31</sup> It is to that story—a story of *economic* coercion and complicity—that we must now turn.

Bentinck's policy on education assigned exclusive priority to instruction in English. In this, most of the Bengali leaders were in perfect accord with the British to whom they owed their success and wealth. The Committee of Public Instruction had noted with approval in 1830: 'A taste for English has been widely disseminated, and independent schools conducted by young men, reared in Vidyalaya (Hindu College), are springing up in every direction.'<sup>32</sup> It is worth noting that William Adam, who was charged with the responsibility of preparing reports on the state of education in Bengal and Bihar, disagreed sharply with the policy of introducing English as the sole medium of instruction.<sup>33</sup> However, neither the British administrators nor the leaders or *dalapatis* of various Indian communities were swayed by his findings and recommendations. In fact, Bentinck did not even wait for the report to implement his educational reform. The formal institution of English was, for Bentinck certainly, a foregone conclusion.

The long and protracted debate over the education policy in India that was ultimately decided by Bentinck's Minute is well-known. I do not wish to rehearse its contours here. Rather, my focus is on the various economic (and in some cases intellectual) motivations that made English instruction an attractive option for the indigenous elite and the middle class. The different segments of the middle class who had come into existence via British patronage each had different stakes in the matter.<sup>34</sup> Though most were suspicious of anglicization, viewing missionary institutions as proselytizing agents, they also recognized the increasing importance of English as a medium of communication, knowledge of which would ensure a living wage.<sup>35</sup> An editorial in the *Samachar Darpan* dated 13th December 1834, noted that, 'an acquaintance with Bengalee will rather prevent their [Indians'] acquiring wealth . . . those well acquainted with English may obtain situations as writers with long salaries and prospects of higher appointments.'<sup>36</sup> Many others, like Rammohun and Vidya-sagar, however, viewed English education as 'the window on the world,' an opportunity to counteract conservative, often obscurantist, tendencies within indigenous society which the institution of British rule in many instances had maintained, legitimised or recreated.

Initially there was little social intercourse between the emergent middle classes and the British. Fear of pollution kept upper-caste Hindus at a distance. For the majority, this exclusivity remained throughout the decades of British rule. But a distinction needs to be made between the large numbers of Indians who learnt English in order to make a living and the fabulously wealthy absentee landlords of Calcutta who were often not only fluent in English, but who faithfully emulated the lifestyles of the European aristocracy. For the majority

who learnt it, English was a means to an end, not the signifier of a lifestyle.

The political economy of colonialism necessitated a reorganisation of existing class relations. Although Macaulay in 1835 had articulated the British ambition of creating a buffer class, it was Lord Cornwallis, Hastings' successor as Governor General, who had formally initiated the process. On the one hand, he was deeply suspicious, even disdainful of Indian Company servants, purging the Company of Indians from any position of importance: 'I think it must be universally admitted that without a large and well-regulated body of Europeans, our hold of these valuable dominions must be very insecure.'<sup>37</sup> But on the other hand, through a quite different process of 'anglicisation' he helped to create a new landed gentry that replaced the old landed aristocracy. Cornwallis's declared goal had been to 'make everything as English as possible in a country which resembles England in nothing.'<sup>38</sup>

Arguably the most important, and certainly the most far-reaching in effect of his several innovations, was over-hauling the land relation in Bengal. Cornwallis sought to create a propertied class dependent upon and loyal to the British. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 was instituted for the explicit purpose of encouraging and establishing a class of capitalist landowners and entrepreneurs in India similar to the rural landowning class in Britain. This was, in Eric Stokes' words, 'a frank attempt to apply the English Whig philosophy of government.' Although Cornwallis implemented it, the plan was largely determined by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, who were convinced that 'the magic touch of property would set certain productive principle in operation.'<sup>39</sup> The Permanent Settlement, as Asok Sen notes, helped 'to convert Bengal and her new middle class into loyal supporters of the English rule' and created a 'real stronghold of men and resources to be used for the expansion of the British empire over the whole sub-continent of India.'<sup>40</sup> Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Radhakanta Deb and Motilal Seal, among others, hailed from families that were conspicuous beneficiaries of this new system of property ownership and land revenue assessment.

For the British, whatever the nuances of the debates and controversies about 'good government' of India, the primary driving force was necessarily profit. Whatever reformist zeal that may have motivated the various factions (Anglicists, Orientalists, Evangelists, etc.) they all remained hostage to the need to earn good return on British investment.<sup>41</sup> Profit was the name of the game and both the British and the Indians played it well. Macaulay himself was quite candid about the aims of British education in India: its purpose was not only, and perhaps not even principally, to create subservient subjects or sustain a cheap labour pool, but more importantly to produce good consumers of British commodities.

The mere extent of empire is not necessarily an advantage. To many governments it had been cumbersome; to some it had been fatal. . . It would be, on the most selfish view of the case, far better for us that the people of India were well-governed and independent of us than ill-governed and subject to us; that they were ruled by their own kings, but wearing broadcloth, and working with our cutlery, than that they were performing their salaams to English collectors and English magistrates, but were too ignorant to value or too poor to buy English manufactures.<sup>42</sup>

As early as 1772, Henry Patullo in his essay outlining a more lucrative revenue system for Bengal had advocated the introduction of individual ownership in property. Patullo argued that this change would not only be stabilising for the empire but would promote a market for British commodities as well: 'Sensible also of the great advantage of property, however small, with fixed family residences and the conveniences of British furniture and way of living, they (the people of Bengal) will without doubt relish them, and thereby open up a new branch to the Company, carrying thither British commodities. . .'<sup>43</sup> Ranajit Guha has commented, 'It was precisely the plan 'of carrying thither British commodities' which was eventually to turn his (Patullo's) physiocratic utopia into the quasi-feudal settlement of Lord Cornwallis.'<sup>44</sup> Over three quarters of a century later, and after the English had effectively won the day, Sir Charles Wood's despatch of 1854 reiterated the motivation for creating the anglicized indigenous population; these groups would engender an almost inexhaustible demand for British goods.

British rule had reduced to insignificance the power of the Muslim 'nobility' as well as the old *zamindars* and bankers. The administrative reforms and the sweeping economic changes brought about by new land laws and the burgeoning commercial transactions spelt opportunities for men who hailed from that stratum of traditional society which was best placed to take advantage of these rapid changes; the upper caste Hindus such as the *Baidyas* and the *Kayasthas*.<sup>45</sup> These were mostly small traders, brokers and junior administrators, *pykars*, *dallals*, *gomasthas*, *munshis*, *banyans* and *dewans*. Brokers such as the *Setts* and *Basaks*, who were weavers by caste and profession, amassed great wealth by trading in cotton piece goods. By the middle of the nineteenth century they had become money-lenders in Calcutta. This group, which also included Hindu bankers and merchants, invested their considerable profits in land, buying up *zamindaris* from traditional landowners whose estates the government confiscated and put up for auction for non-payment of revenues.<sup>46</sup> Since the revenue demands were exorbitant, the *ryots* thoroughly mismanaged, many a *zamindar* failed to realise the rent fixed by the British, and fell prey to the 'sunset law.'

The Permanent Settlement conferred exclusive ownership rights on these new *zamindars* at the expense of the peasants, creating a *rentier* social element completely divorced from the productive process.<sup>47</sup> Since English merchants were not allowed under the law to hold lands in their own names, all those eager to invest in indigo plantations, for example, frequently operated through Indian agents. These absentee landlords, who were the owners of land and capital, were considered the *abhijat bhadrolok* or aristocrats in this changing social milieu. Most had started out as *banyans* to various agency houses, invested in indigo or cotton, purchased *zamindaris* and settled in Calcutta to lead lavish lifestyles. In the early days of Company rule, the advocates of free trade and these native capitalists became natural allies bound together by their aspirations to overturn the monopoly of the Company. The big agency houses needed the Indians as allies against the monopoly of the Company. There were close ties between men such as Rammohun and Dwarkanath who combined *zamindari* with business ventures and money-lending and the British free-traders.

As a contemporary observer commented, 'under our sovereignty, chiefly in our service, and entirely through our protection' this new class of Indians were becoming increasingly influential, and it was within this class that 'an indistinct sort of link may be discovered between the rulers and the people.'<sup>48</sup> If anywhere, it was among this metropolitan elite that the effect of anglicization took firm hold, socially and culturally. By 1842, only seven years after the implementation of Bentinck's policy, C. Boutros concluded that 'the English language itself has thus become not only of *material* advantage, but it is *fashionable* in the Indian Metropolis; a native gentleman does not like to confess his ignorance of it; it would seem as if he would lose caste in the eyes of an Englishman of high rank by addressing him in Bengali.'<sup>49</sup> The slide from material advantage to fashion is the story of British hegemony among the *elites* in Bengal and in India. Among this class the taste for, indeed the very markers of, leisure, recreation and sociability were set by the British. Moreover, they could afford lavish lifestyles that rivalled the conspicuous consumption of the British upper class in India. But that kind of culture remained confined within a tiny minority of elites who, as statistics demonstrate, were usually not among those who routinely sent their sons to institutions such as the Hindu (later Presidency) College.<sup>50</sup>

The success of the British project is borne out by contemporary descriptions of the life-styles of the urban rich. Fanny Parkes in her *Wanderings of a Pilgrim* describes the extravagant displays of wealth at 'native' parties: 'In the room on one side. . . a handsome supper was laid out, in the European style . . . where ices and French wine were in plenty for the European guests. In the rooms on the other sides . . . were groups of natch girls dancing and singing . . .' The house itself was

splendidly furnished, where 'everything (was) in European style with the exception of the owner.'<sup>51</sup> The Indian elite emulated European life-styles quite faithfully. Their residences were often furnished with 'elegant chandeliers, pier glasses, couches, chests of drawers, writing desks,' while they took to the 'habits of drinking tea,' kept 'English coaches and equipages, and one individual was noted for having also an English coachman.'<sup>52</sup>

These conspicuous beneficiaries of British colonial penetration of India were by no means a unitary group (though they were mostly members of the traditional high castes). Their divergent social and political ideologies were largely mediated by: (1) a complex expanding network of loyalties to caste and sub-caste; (2) equally complex alignments and antagonisms among hostile factions; (3) their proximity to specific British groups (the Company or the Free Traders); and (4) the sources of their income (absentee landlordism or commerce and banking enterprise). These groups cannot be easily categorised either as 'traditionalist' or 'modernisers.' Thus, even the so-called conservative sections of the elites were enthusiastic about English education but they demonstrated little interest in 'Western' thought and were often bitterly opposed to social reforms. On the other hand, many, though English educated, in their role as *dalapatis* or leaders of their community, often sought to impose strict adherence to 'traditional' social rules.<sup>53</sup> But on the whole they were loyalists and argued for liberalisation of British rule rather than its abolition.

It was also this class of Indians who had established Hindu (later Presidency) College in 1817 in Calcutta,<sup>54</sup> an English school in Benares in 1818,<sup>55</sup> and the Elphinstone Institution in Bombay a decade later to educate the sons of upper caste Hindus in English. The founding of Hindu College ('the Oxford of the east') 'marks an important era in the history of education in India as the first spontaneous desire manifested by the natives in the country for instruction in English and the literature of Europe.'<sup>56</sup> Rammohun, who had been forced to sever all connections with the Hindu College because of his open criticism of Hindu orthodoxy, founded an English school in Suripara and opened an English instruction class in his own home under the charge of Mr. Moncroft. These urban elites were also active in the Calcutta School Book Society and the Calcutta School Society, both of which played a prominent role in the dissemination of primary education, at least in Calcutta. The emphasis in the curriculum, which included English language and literature, was on mathematics, geography, natural sciences, and English history.

Although 'rags to riches' stories about these self-styled aristocrats abound, their numbers were modest compared to those who were referred to as the *maddhyabitta sreni* (middle class) or the professional petty-bourgeois strata, the members of which were drawn from diverse social groups. The Company conducted its business by



employing an army of petty clerks and a few junior administrators in the revenue and judicial departments. Calcutta was not only the centre of Company administration, it was an important port, a commercial centre and the cultural capital. In addition to the liberal intelligentsia who owed their wealth to real estate speculation, money-lending and absentee landlordism, the city included professional and tertiary workers like lawyers, teachers, doctors, administrators and clerks. These latter were the indispensable auxiliaries of the Empire.<sup>57</sup> It was, in fact, the necessity to train a whole army of tertiary workers that convinced Macaulay of the efficacy of English education.

This education was specifically designed to create a certain class who would assist in the administrative functioning of the colonial state and was neither designed to be, nor directed toward, mass education. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a 'professional' middle class began to emerge in Bengal. They were a 'peculiar hybrid, drawn from various stations of society, including the landholder. Neither land nor wealth was their insignia. It was western education that marked them off.'<sup>58</sup> As early as 1830, the *Samachar Darpan* noted that 'sons of dewans, brothers of clerks, nephews of accountants or grandsons of sarkars dealing with the disposal, auction and sale of goods,' joined the Hindu college in numbers to qualify as teachers, writers and computers.<sup>59</sup> For this group of people, education meant social mobility. An editorial in *The Friend of India* dated 1 August 1850, noted with approval '(t)he eagerness with which natives of all castes avail themselves of the Missionary schools.'<sup>60</sup>

The intense interest in learning English derived from purely pragmatic reasons for these groups. English was the language of the rulers; its acquisition meant social and economic gains. For those who came from inconspicuous economic backgrounds and were otherwise without the prospect of a job, English was a technical language with a wholly instrumental purpose. 'If anyone became well-educated in English, everyone respected him greatly,' observed a citizen in a letter to the editor of *Paridarshak*.<sup>61</sup> Increasingly, it was this section of the middle class that began to dominate tertiary education, for the aristocrats did not need such education, and the more impoverished simply could not afford college fees. (Presidency College, for example, charged Rs. 12 per-month at a time when monthly lower middle class salaries did not much exceed that figure).

The utility of English in the quest for upward mobility was not merely a perceived advantage. The British had slowly but surely begun to formalize the use of English for official purposes. As early as 1829, it must be remembered, the Secretary to the Bengal Government in a letter to the Committee of Public Instructions made it clear that 'unless English be made the language of business, political negotiation, and jurisprudence, it will not be universally or extensively studied by

our subjects,' he recommended that 'a decided preference will be given to candidates for office, who may add a knowledge of English to other qualifications.' The letter also noted that the Delhi Committee 'have also advocated, with great force and earnestness, the expediency of rendering the English language of our public tribunals and correspondence, and the necessity of making known that such is our eventual purpose, if we wish the study to be successfully and extensively prosecuted.'<sup>62</sup> In 1837, English replaced Persian as the official and court language. In less than a decade Lord Hardinge announced that Indians who were proficient in English would be given preference for all government appointments. Concomitantly, at Macaulay's recommendation, Oriental scholarship was discontinued. The Government, in a resolution in 1835, 'categorically stated that no portion of the funds set aside for educational purposes may be used in printing oriental books. Thus, extensive plans for the publication of Arabic and Sanskrit works were immediately suspended, as were medical classes held in Indian languages. English education became virtually the only means of social and economic mobility, so much so that parents were said to be 'anxious to give their children as large a knowledge of it as possible,'<sup>63</sup> which meant that they 'not infrequently incur(red) an expense which would seem altogether disproportioned to their means.'<sup>64</sup> In the early part of the century, the missionaries had noted: 'Commerce has raised new thoughts and awakened new energies, so that hundreds, if we could teach them gratis, would crowd to learn the language.' Whereas the missionaries obviously saw the instruction in English as the first step towards 'diffusing the gospel,' the indigenous population grasped it as the stepping stone to economic prosperity.<sup>65</sup> Lured by the possibility of 'long salaries,' they were willing to pay out of pocket to purchase this precious commodity.

\* \* \*

It is fair to say, then, that Bentinck's Minute was really super-erogatory; for all intents and purposes English had *de facto* become the language of instruction, of economic advantage, and of official exchange. The Minute on Education, far from being an innovation, was merely a formalisation of processes that had been under way for several decades. Indian educationists themselves, albeit for varying reasons, had lobbied for such a change. All evidence points to the fact that vernacular education, particularly in the urban areas, had begun to falter and lose out to English in sheer marketability. With the Educational Minute of 1835, the death knell was sounded. For vernacular schools there was patronage, but few students. Their dwindling numbers in the Calcutta Madrasa and the Sanskrit College are telling; in 1830 the number of Arabic students fell to 17 from 75 in the previous year; and in the Sanskrit College the enrollment for

Hindu Mathematics dropped from 32 (1832) to 8 (1833). The enrollment for English classes, on the other hand, rose steadily: 66 in 1832 to 80 in the next year.<sup>66</sup> In 1840 Hindu College established a 'Pautshalla' to revitalize vernacular education. The scheme failed miserably, since the students and their guardians 'were more interested in their further education in English either in Hindoo College or in some English school of the city.' The fate of the Tattvabodhini Pathshala was similar. Founded in 1941 to provide Bengali instruction to children, it was forced to introduce English into the curriculum in a vain effort to stem the flow of large numbers of students to exclusively English-medium schools. The school was forced to close.<sup>67</sup> The Collector of Nattore reported in 1846 that 'native gentlemen' had expressed 'deep regret that Government should support Vernacular schools which they do not want, and withhold English schools of which they stand so much in need.'<sup>68</sup> The Commissioner of Dacca was equally candid in his report: 'The desire to learn English is strong and unmistakable, all over the country . . . and every year will add to the number and importunity of those who are eager to have English schools established amongst them.'<sup>69</sup> Macaulay's observation that Sanskrit education procured for the students 'neither bread nor respect' was corroborated by the Sanskrit College students who, in a petition, complained to him that they needed 'means for a decent living, and for our progressive improvement' which their education had hitherto failed to provide.<sup>70</sup>

A distinction needs to be made, however, between the general clamour for learning English and the educational reforms advocated by certain segments of the liberal intelligentsia. Rammohun was one of the leading figures who had advocated the institution of English. Although Rammohun's objection to the founding of the Sanskrit College is often cited as evidence of the fact that Indians had themselves completely abandoned traditional learning, it is important to keep in mind that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Rammohun advocated not so much *English* education, as the teaching of Western scientific knowledge. It was to this end that he encouraged translation of English scientific works into Bengali. He stressed the inclusion of mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy 'and other useful Sciences' to create a 'more liberal and enlightened system of instruction.'<sup>71</sup> His objections to the founding of the Sanskrit College were based on similar principles: 'This seminary (similar to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions, of little or no practical use to the possessor or to the society.'<sup>72</sup> Rammohun was certainly not an advocate of 'westernization.' His criticism was mainly directed against the orthodoxy of Hindu pundits and the way it was inextricably woven into the traditional syllabi, not against Sanskrit learning as such. He was himself a scholar of classical languages such as Arabic, Persian,

Sanskrit, Hebrew and Latin. He was attacking conservatism, obscurantism and superstition, much of which stood on the foundation of Sanskrit teaching which, at the time, was mired in the most backward ideologies.

Vidyasagar's reforms at the Sanskrit College were propelled by similar concerns. What these social reformers acknowledged was the superior achievement and advancement of western technology and science and not European culture as such. Nor did they envisage a total repudiation of traditional learning. Iswar Chandra, for example, wanted a curriculum that would result in the 'acquirement of the largest store of the sound Sanskrit and English combined' since he was convinced that such a synthesis was 'likely to produce men who will be highly useful in the work of imbuing our vernacular dialects with the science and civilization of the Western world.'<sup>73</sup> A sound education in Sanskrit was to be enhanced by 'three branches in English, namely, History, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy.' The alternative, as they saw it, was the obscurantist sanskritic education being advocated by pundits and orthodox leaders of the community. Rammohun himself was the founder of the Vedanta College and was an editor of the first Bengali newspaper, *Samachar Darpan*; he also wrote textbooks on geography, astronomy and geometry in Bengali. In the Bengali weekly newspaper, *Sambad Kaumadi*, Rammohun wrote several articles on topics such as the 'properties of fishes' and 'echo in acoustics.' These were among the earliest scientific writings in the vernacular. Similarly, Vidyasagar's plans for reforming the curriculum were motivated by a desire to create 'an enlightened Bengali Literature.' It is no accident that both men viewed the system of education that was rapidly taking shape as elitist, and expressed their personal opposition to the exclusionary regulations of such institutions as the Sanskrit College. (When the Government established Sanskrit College in 1823, only Brahmins and Radi Baidyas were admitted). Rammohun and Vidyasagar's call for a secular, rationalist education was of a piece with their objections against those moribund structures of indigenous society such as the destructive caste system, the practice of child marriage, the restrictions against widow remarriage and the prejudice against female education. One must also bear in mind that Rammohun and Vidyasagar both received traditional education and continued to value much in it. In any case, neither was convinced that British culture as such was superior to his own. Their reformist ideals led them to oppose the indigenous language training that most conservative sections of the society were advocating in the name of 'tradition,' even though their goals were surely circumscribed by their own class allegiances.<sup>74</sup>

Rammohun's ideal curriculum was largely ignored by the Macaulay-style education system that was put in place for economic expediency. In his 1825 Minute, Holt Mackenzie, the President of the Fort William

College, had strongly advocated the Indianization of the Civil Service (which had been closed to Indians by Cornwallis Act of 1791), whose functions, he argued, 'could be performed cheaper and better by Natives.'<sup>75</sup> Because of the expense involved in appointing British covenanted officers, their numbers for the Bengal Presidency was restricted in 1835 to 516, and in 1836 to 501 only.<sup>76</sup> The British government needed to employ more Indians on lower salaries for, as Ellenborough put it: 'We cannot govern India financially without this change.'<sup>77</sup>

One of the far-reaching effects of the Educational Minute was the greater access that was now afforded to many who had been shut out from English education. As one contemporary editorial put it, English is the language 'the Bengalese learn so greedily with a view to obtain 'situations.'<sup>78</sup> In the earlier decades of the century the metropolitan upper classes had seized the advantage of English education as a means to employment. But greater access would finally lead, to a supply of qualified candidates far in excess of the demand. In the Education Report for 1871-72, Woodrow remarked: 'The supply of educated men in all departments is excessive . . . and their worth in the money market has accordingly declined.'<sup>79</sup> The position of the educated Indian was summarized in 1881 as being caught between unresolvable contradictions: 'precluded by his education from manual labour' and 'in keenest competition for intellectual employment—for there are thousands like himself—as the market, though ample, has been overstocked . . .'<sup>80</sup>

This overstocking must not be mistaken for a large-scale growth in literacy. Education remained a distant dream for the vast majority. Macaulay's much-touted 'filtration theory,' which predicted that education would filter down to the masses, proved a pipe dream. Once again for reasons of economy, Holt Mackenzie, then a member of the Committee of Public Instruction, had suggested in his report of 1823, that the immediate consideration of the Government should be to provide instruction for 'what may be called the educated and influential classes.' It was his belief that western education 'should descend from the higher or educated classes and gradually spread through their example.'<sup>81</sup> As Lal Behari Dey had observed in a speech in 1868, 'the upper class filter' in practice was 'not a filter, but a jar hermetically sealed.'<sup>82</sup> Contemporary sources are unfailing in their criticism of the elitist education policy. *The Friend of India* accused the Government of India for 'positively discouraging all intellectual efforts among the masses and educating only the upper crust of native society.'<sup>83</sup> An editorial in *The Statesman* noted that the Bengali intelligentsia 'contain among them a very large class of men who have not to work for their living.'<sup>84</sup> It was this class, the editorial further noted, that 'is trained exactly as a European in matters literary.' If British educational policy had been solely guided by the desire to

produce a miniscule hegemonized elite, they were certainly successful, largely because of the complicity and initiative of the indigenous elites themselves. But if their attempt had been to produce *en masse* subjects who were Indian only in blood and colour, it is difficult to see how this might have been achieved. The statistics are telling. At the time of independence only fifteen per cent of the population was literate. At times this figure had been as low as six per cent.<sup>85</sup> Certainly the desire for *English instruction* was strong, especially among the upper castes and classes, for reasons I have elaborated in this paper. Whether there was a concomitant desire to read *English literature* is less certain. It is also quite evident that Indians flocked to learn English and often paid exorbitant amounts to do so, but this does not automatically mean that they 'consented' to British rule. In fact, resistance against British rule rose as much from the English-knowing groups as from other sectors.

Nor did English become the preferred mode of creativity. Although creative writing in English was taken up as early as the 1860s (Bankim Chandra's *Rajmohan's Wife* was probably the first English novel to be written by an Indian), until quite recently the numbers of those who routinely or exclusively wrote in English were modest enough. English departments remain popular only among the narrowest segment of the population, as do anglicized schools (such as the public schools).<sup>86</sup> Rather, English is the language of administration, inter-state communication, status and of business, technology and science—a fact that is largely determined by economic and political hegemony of English around the world. As Aijaz Ahmad notes: 'The main *cultural* claim of English during the colonial period was . . . a non-literary one.' It was a 'centralising language to sustain its (India's) national unity—the 'nation' in this conception was co-terminus with exigencies of administration. . . .'<sup>87</sup> English functioned not only as the chief cultural and communication vehicle, it aided the centralisation of the colonial state apparatus. The Englishing of India was part and parcel of the processes of class formation and social privilege under colonial rule.

If the colonial administrators instituted English in order to produce consent among the ruled, it is remarkable how little resistance there was from the indigenous population to begin with. It is fair to say that indigenous elites clearly aided the introduction of English as the official language. Certainly the motivations of the different factions involved were quite distinct. But both the British and the Indians had clear economic stakes in the matter. For the British, the Englishing of India meant the production of faithful consumers of British goods. But it also meant a cheaper, and in their view, a more efficient way of meeting the demands of a vast administration that encompassed areas of immense linguistic variety. For Indians, a knowledge of English meant better job prospects. If the construction of consent was at the heart of British educational policy, its object should have been the

masses. For, it was among those who had little hope of obtaining any education and who had little possibility of anything but hard manual labour that there was considerable resistance to the relentless exploitation that the Raj oversaw. And while a miniscule number slavishly followed British cultural lead, a series of peasant revolts broke out in Bengal among people who were largely illiterate.

At the same time, it was the English educated who led the nationalist movement from its very inception. It was equally through English that the 'schooled' classes were introduced to some of the most revolutionary ideas of the time. If Milton and Shakespeare were included in the curriculum as a 'disguised form of authority' and as 'instrument of discipline and management,' it is important to bear in mind that knowledge of English also introduced the Indians to the ideas of Voltaire, Thomas Paine (*The Age of Reason* rather than *The Rights of Man*), and the scientific writings of Newton and Davy, all of which were translated and circulated among the literate classes. 'English' neither pacified Indians, nor did it by itself infuse the population with nationalist fervour. The role of English, like colonialism itself, was contradictory in its outcome.

The fact that English has not only continued but expanded its influence after independence points to the links between the colonial and post-colonial state. Forty-five years after independence, English remains firmly entrenched in the lives of Indians. Although the compulsory teaching of English has long been abolished in almost every state in the country, it continues *de facto*, as in the early nineteenth century, to be the language associated with social mobility, power and privilege. At the 150th anniversary of St. Xavier's School in Calcutta, Jyoti Bosu, the Chief Minister of the State, and a former student of the School, declared, that 'English is indispensable.' A recent evaluation of the efforts of the Left Front government's attempt to abolish English from primary schools in West Bengal had this to say:

The literate classes in the state (West Bengal), despite their jingoistic devotion to the cultural heritage of the Bengali language, fear that by abolishing English at the primary stages the Government is in effect ensuring a lifetime of mediocrity and restricted opportunities for their children. Most palpably worried are the urbanites for whom the institutes of technology, medicine and management outside the state are a paradise that can be reached only by treading the straight and narrow path of education in English.<sup>88</sup>

The centrality of English is well demonstrated by the fact that the Forward Bloc, the second largest constituent of the Left Front, ascribed its poor showing in the Lok Sabha election of 1985 to the educational

reform abolishing compulsory English instruction at the primary level.<sup>89</sup>

In contemporary India, in the matter of English education, not much seems to have changed since the early nineteenth century. The similarities between the rhetoric of the nineteenth-century Indian intelligentsia advocating English and that of its modern counterpart is striking. English still remains the least volatile option for managing linguistic diversity. The ability to speak English, and above all to speak it without any trace of regional accent, is prized by parents, educators and employees. English was instituted as the language of higher education by the British—and it remains so. It continues to regulate access to specialized, professional training; it is linked to economic benefits and it reproduces and maintains cultural privilege. Those who appreciably benefitted economically and politically from British rule were the most convinced of the necessity for English instruction. It is no surprise that the very same classes continue to be schooled in English. All those who are educated in these exclusive institutions, where instruction is conducted almost entirely in English, exert an influence disproportionate to their actual numbers. They are the contemporary inheritors of the economic, political and cultural power relinquished by the British in 1947. 'The dominant language of society,' it has been observed, 'like the dominant ideology itself, is always the language of its ruling class.'<sup>90</sup> In India, the ruling class continues to speak English over forty years after the departure of its colonial partners and masters.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Asok Sen, *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and his Elusive Milestones*, Calcutta, Riddhi-India, 1977, p. 5. The book provides an excellent overview of the socio-political milieu of nineteenth-century Bengal.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-18. See also, Subal Chandra Mitra, *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (Story of His Life and Work)*, Delhi, 1975; rpt.
3. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest. Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
5. See, for example, Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York, Knopf, 1993, p. 42.
6. Quoted in David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Los Angeles & Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969, p. 16.
7. Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal. An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement*, Paris, Mouton & Company, 1963, p. 13.
8. Letter to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman of the Court of Directors quoted in Bernard Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command,' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 315.



9. Letter of 27 April 1786 to the Governor-General, John Macpherson. Quoted in Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda*, Calcutta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1988, p. 10.
10. William Carey, a member of the Baptist Missionary Society, had arrived in India in 1790. In 1794 he opened a school at Maldah for poor children, instructing them in, among other things, 'doctrines of Christianity.' See J.C. Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward Embracing the History of Serampore Mission I*, London, Longman, Brown, Longmans and Robert, 1864, p. 70. Along with Marshman and Ward, who had arrived in India in 1799, and settled in Serampore under the protection of the Danish Government, Carey 'carried on his pioneer work.' See D.P. Sinha, *The Educational Policy of the East India Company*, Calcutta, Punthi Pushtak, 1964, p. 9.
11. H. Sharp, (ed.), *Selections from Educational Records*, Part I, 1781-1839, Calcutta, Bureau of Education, India, 1920, p. 22.
12. Ibid. In the debates over the implementation of the resolution both Anglicists and Orientalists made good use of the vagueness of the language. The Orientalists argued that 'revival' of literature could only refer to Sanskrit and Arabic. The Anglicists, on the other hand, focussed on the phrase 'useful learning,' claiming with Rammohun Roy that 'it was worse than a waste of time' to teach the sciences 'in the state in which they are found in the oriental books.' See Rammohun Roy's Letter to William Pitt, Lord Amherst, 11th December, 1823; cited in *ibid.* p. 98.
13. Ibid., p. 22.
14. These were the Nepal War of 1814-16, the Pindari War of 1817-18, and the Third Anglo-Maratha War of 1817-18. A late nineteenth century account of English education in India registered this point: 'In 1817, Lord Hastings, after he had broken the power of the Mahrattas, for the first time announced that the Government of India did not consider it necessary to keep the natives in a state of ignorance. . . .' (emphasis added). Syed Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India (1781 to 1893)*, 1895; rpt. Idrah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1981, p. 3.
15. Sharp, *Selections*, p. 22.
16. Ibid., p. 3.
17. Sinha, *Educational Policy*, p. 9.
18. 'Despatch of the Court of Directors, dated the 16th February 1787,' in Sharp, *Selections*, p. 3.
19. For a useful account of this debate and its outcome and effects see Gauri Viswanathan's 'Currying Favour: The Beginnings of English Literary Study in India' *Social Text*, Fall, 1988, pp. 85-104. See also Aparna Basu, *Essays on the History of Indian Education*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1982.
20. Sivnath Sastri, *Ramtanu Lahiri*, English translation, Sir Roper Lethbridge, 1907, p. 93. Cited in R.N. Das Gupta, 'Macaulay's Writings on India,' in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 237.
21. G.M. Young, (ed), *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1952, p. 729.
22. Although census data on the population of Calcutta in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are often unreliable, it is generally accepted that between 1821 and 1837 the population of the city grew by nearly 50,000. See A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal 1818-1835*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1965, pp. 11-12. See also S.N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in India,' in Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 36-38. Mukherjee writes: 'As far as can be ascertained, the majority of people in Calcutta were male and adult . . . If increasing male immigration is a sign of urbanization then the process started very early in Calcutta.'

23. Philip Anderson, *The English in Western India. Being the Early History of the Factory of Surat, of Bombay, and the Subordinate Factories on the Western Coast*, Bombay, Smith, Taylor and Co., 1854, pp. 10, 31.
24. See B.B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes. Their Growth in Modern Times*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961, for an account of the emergence of professional positions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
25. Kopf, *British Orientalism*, p. 108.
26. Sinha, *Educational Policy*, p. 10.
27. W.H. Carey, *The Good Old Days of John Company, (being curious reminiscences Illustrating Manners and Customs of the British in India. . . from 1630-1858, with brief notices of places and people of those times)*, Vol. I, Calcutta, Cambay & Co., 1906, pp. 397-400.
28. W.S. Seaton Karr, (ed), *The Calcutta Gazette*, Vol. III, Calcutta, Bibhash Gupta, p. 531.
29. The usual rate of tuition was between Rs. 25 and Rs. 35 for each boy. Compared to the average monthly income of teachers in indigenous schools which averaged between Rs. 4 and 6, these were astronomical charges. See Carey, *The Good Old Days*, p. 577.
30. Cited in Sen, *Vidya Sagar*, p. 14n.
31. Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, p. 10.
32. *Report etc. of the General Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1831, p. 47; cited in Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas*, p. 144.
33. William Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal and Bihar*, Third Report, Calcutta University Press, 1965, p. 340.
34. I am using the term 'middle class' to designate the groups of people who gained economic advantage either through trade with the British or by becoming 'professionals' through education. For an analysis of the emergence of these groups see Misra, *Indian Middle Classes*.
35. David Kopf notes that a 'learned Indian who entered the service of the collegiate institution (i.e., Fort William and its satellites) in 1801 . . . might earn . . . a minimum of 10 rupees a month and a maximum of 200.' He contrasts this with the pay of professors in indigenous institutions which, according to Adam's report, was an average of 79 rupees a year. In some areas, teachers earned as little as one rupee a year! (*British Orientalism*, p. 109).
36. Quoted in N.L. Basak, *History of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1800-1854)*, Calcutta, 1974, p. 259.
37. C.E. Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, London, Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1838, p. 75.
38. Quoted in A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, Manchester, University of Manchester Press, 1931, p. 173.
39. 'They (the Board of Directors) were convinced, to use their striking words, that the magic touch of property would set a certain productive principle in operation. . .'. W.W. Hunter, 'A Dissertation on Landed Property and Land Rights in Bengal at the end of the Eighteenth Century' in *Bengal Manuscript Records*, Vol. I, London, 1874, p. 25. Quoted by Asok Sen, 'The Bengal Economy and Rammohun Roy,' in V.C. Joshi (ed.), *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India*, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1975, p. 112. For an incisive analysis of the ideological grounds for the Permanent Settlement see Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property*.
40. Sen, 'The Bengal Economy,' p. 114-115.
41. See Francis G. Hutchins, *Illusion of Permanence, British Imperialism in India*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967, particularly pp. 107-8.
42. Lord T.B. Macaulay, *Speeches*.
43. Henry Patullo, *An Essay Upon the Land and Improvement of the Revenues of Bengal*, London, 1772, p. 28; quoted in Guha, *A Rule of Property*, p. 47.

44. Ibid.
45. For an analysis of the intricate connection of class and caste in Bengal politics, see S.N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38' in Leach and Mukherjee, *Elites in South Asia*, pp. 33-78.
46. W.W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, Smith Elder and Co., 1868, gives us a portrait of the ruin of old landed families. For an account of the economic ascendancy of the middle-men see Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas*, pp. 6-11.
47. Asok Sen notes that traditionally all land-rights 'had their validity not so much in the idea of any exclusive personal ownership, as in a structure of claims governed by customs and admitting of the co-existence of those various interests and the continuance of production and revenue. This was a system subject indeed to various degrees of heterogeneity and arbitrariness, but not to any developed concept of exclusive personal ownership' in 'The Bengal Economy,' pp. 115-16.
48. Walter Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer*, Vol. I, London, 1828, p. 323; quoted in Sen, *Vidyasagar*, p. 10.
49. C. Boutros, *An Inquiry into the System of Education Most Likely to be Generally Popular and Beneficial in Behar and the Upper Provinces*, Serampore, Serampore Press, 1842, p. 9.
50. See John McGuire, *The Making of a Colonial Mind: A Quantitative Study of the Bhadrolok in Calcutta, 1857-1885*. Canberra, Australian National University Monograph on South Asia No. 10., 1983, p. 52. The statistics provided by McGuire are quite revealing. In 1872 less than 5 per cent of the students in Presidency College were 'upper class.' Undoubtedly this was partially because this group had no economic motivation for higher education. But they also kept away from the College in order to avoid contact with those whom they considered lower class.
51. Fanny Parkes, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque, During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East, with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, Vol. I, London, 1850, p. 29, 30.
52. *The East India Gazetteer*, 1828, Vol. I, p. 324.
53. Devendranath Tagore, for example, who was a leader of the conservative section of the Brahma Samaj, was an enthusiastic supporter of establishing an English school in Nadia. Raj Narain Bose, another conservative member of the Brahma Samaj, taught English at Sanskrit College. Conservative Sanskrit scholars like Radhakanta Deb and Mrityunjoy Bidyalankar were among the twenty Hindu members of the Hindu College Committee.
54. An editorial in the *Friend of India* (14 June, 1855) referred to the college as 'a grand institution in Calcutta . . . which should, in some measure, become to Bengal what Cambridge and Oxford were to England.' Benoy Ghose (ed. and comp.), *Selections from English Periodicals*, III, Calcutta, Papyrus, 1979, p. 77. The Hindu gentry of Calcutta were able to raise Rs. 113, 179 to establish the College. The curriculum was to concentrate on the 'cultivation of the Bengali and English languages . . .; the English system of morals; grammar; writing (in English as well as Bengali); arithmetic, history, geography, astronomy, mathematics and in time as funds increased, English belle letters, poetry etc.' *Printed Parliamentary Papers, Second Report of the House of Lords*, 1853, pp. 236-7.
55. Joy Narain Ghosal, one of the leading residents of Benares, presented a proposal to Lord Moira in 1814 for establishing a school that would be equipped to impart English instruction. The plan was approved and the school opened in July 1818. All expenses of the institution were borne by Joy Narain Ghosal.
56. Howell, *Education in British India prior to 1854 and in 1870-71*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 9; quoted in Sinha, *Educational Policy*, p. 38.
57. A popular satire published in 1889 had the Hindu god Brahma observe: 'How strange! The people I see, meet, and talk with are all clerks! One finds few

- shopkeepers, capitalists, professors, doctors, tanners, potters, blacksmiths among Bengalis—they are all clerks . . .', Durga Charan Ray, *Devaganer Martye Agomon* quoted in Sen, *Vidyasagar*, p. 48.
58. Chittabrata Palit, *New Viewpoints on Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, Progressive Publishers, 1980, p. 91.
  59. *Samachar Darpan*, 27 March 1830; quoted in P. Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, Firma: K.P. Chowdhury, 1965, p. 32.
  60. 'Secular and Religious Education' from *Friend of India*, 1 August 1850; in Benoy Ghose *Selections from English Periodicals* p. 31.
  61. *Paridarshak*, 22 November 1861, quoted in Ranu Basu, 'Education, Urbanization and Social Change in Bengal, 1850-1872,' in Barbara Thomas and Spencer Lavan (eds.), *West Bengal and Bangladesh: Perspectives*, Asian Studies Centre, East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1973, p.
  62. Letter from the Secretary of the Bengal Government to the Committee of Public Instructions, dated 26th June, 1829; quoted in Mahmood, *A History of English Education*, p. 77.
  63. Evidence of J.C. Marshman, *Sixth Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Territories*, 1853, *Printed Parliamentary Papers of Great Britain*; cited in Mahmood, p. 78.
  64. Home Department, *Note on the State of Education in India, 1861-62*, in Sharp, *Selections*, pp. 52, 55.
  65. Sinha, *Educational Policies*, p. 10.
  66. Surendra Prasad Sinha, *English in India*, Patna, Janaki Prakashan, 1978, p. 34.
  67. For a comprehensive account of vernacular education see N.L. Basak, *History of Vernacular Education*. See also Pradip Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*.
  68. Report of the Collector of Nattore, 1846; in Sharp, *Selections*, Part II, (1840-1859), p. 68.
  69. Report of the Commissioner of Dacca, 1846; in *Selections*, Part II, p. 69.
  70. Minute by the Hon'ble T.B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835, in Sharp, *Selections*, Part I, p. 113.
  71. See Letter to Lord Amherst, 11 December 1823, in *English Works of Rammohun Roy*, Vol. IV, Calcutta, 1947, p. 105-8.
  72. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
  73. Letter from Iswar Chandra to Rasamoy Datta, Secretary of Sanskrit College, 3 May 1847, quoted in B. Ghose, *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar*, New Delhi, 1965, pp. 677-9.
  74. For a discussion of this aspect of Rammohun see Sumit Sarkar's essay, 'Rammohun and the Break with the Past' in *A Critique of Colonial India*, Calcutta, Papyrus, 1985, pp 1-17. For a discussion of Iswar Chandra's role as a reformer see Sen, *Vidyasagar*.
  75. Quoted in Kopf, *British Orientalism*, p. 227.
  76. See Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes*, p. 163.
  77. Ellenborough to Lord Bentinck, 23 September 1830; quoted in Salahauddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas*, pp. 151-2.
  78. Ghose, *Selections*, VII, p. 33.
  79. 'The Supply of Educated Men' (Editorial), *The Statesman*, 25 November 1875; in Benoy Ghose, *Selections*, Vol. VIII, p. 124a.
  80. Education Commission, *Bengal Report, 1881-82*, p. 148.
  81. Note dated 17 July 1823, by Holt Mackenzie, in Sharp, *Selections*, Vol. I, pp. 57-64.
  82. Quoted in H.A. Stark, *Vernacular Education in Bengal 1813 to 1912*, Calcutta, 1916, p. 89. Lal Behari Dey was specifically refuting Kishori Chand Mitter, who, in a speech to the British India Association had claimed that elementary education had made considerable progress.
  83. Ghose, *Selections*, Vol. VI, p. 33.

84. 'Education in Bengal' (Editorial), *The Statesman*, 8 April, 1875; in Ghose, *Selections*, Vol. VIII, p. 73.
85. See *Progress of Education in the Asian Regions: A Statistical Review*, Bangkok, UNESCO, 1969.
86. Ehsanul Huq's study of Delhi schools, for example, shows that the students of unaided public schools (i.e., completely privatised schools) are of urban background, mainly high caste and from affluent families whose fathers are either in higher administrative services or in big business. *Education and Political Culture in India*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1981, pp. 41-55.
87. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory, Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London, Verso, 1992, p. 74.
88. Indrani Banerjee, 'The Language Lament,' in *India Today*, March 31, 1985.
89. Ibid. Banerjee concedes, on the one hand, 'The left front might be doing the right thing in initiating a programme to bring about literacy to the greatest number,' but, on the other, concludes that the 'shortage of essential English' means a lower level of education, particularly for the sizeable middle class of the State.
90. Ahmad, *In Theory*, p. 78.

NEERA CHANDHOKE\*

## *On the Social Organization of Urban Space— Subversions and Appropriations*

'The heart of the capital city', perceptively remarks a character in the Graham Greene novel *The Comedians* 'is a shanty town'. And if we take this comment on the city in the post-colonial world seriously, as I have done, then the theorist of the urban is provoked to ask the following questions:—who shapes the city? in what image? by what means? against what social odds?, and more importantly, what are the consequences of this kind of spatial and social reordering?

As regards the first question as to who shapes the Indian city; even a cursory look at any Indian city, informs us that the city that presents itself to the visual imagery is the haphazard; the *unintended* city, a city that has the shanty town both occupying its core, as well as delineating its boundaries. The 'illegal', sprawling squatter settlement both extends *and* subverts carefully planned housing spaces, recreation spaces, work spaces, commercial zones, and transport lanes of the Indian city. But more importantly, it is the squatter settlement that *defines* the city, much more than the residential block or the office tower; the luxury hotel or the open parks. Lying cheek by jowl with the office skyscraper, the hotel tower, the informational spire, the recreational spaces, and all the gaudy symbols of affluence and consumerism, lies the shanty town, with its insistent projection into, and constant subversion of, planned urban spaces.

But there is more, squatter settlements *interrogate* urban planning, which builds cities on the backs of these workers, but does not have any place for them in the produced built environment. They symbolize the determination of those who are excluded, to make a place for themselves, in areas which are forbidden to them. *And by challenging the spatial ordering of cities, the inhabitants of these 'dwellings' challenge the social order itself.* Excluded from residential areas, by real estate prices, by land speculation and by myopic land use policies, homeless squatters learn to make homes for themselves by the occupation of public spaces.

---

\* Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

Even though the visibility of these squatter settlements is constantly sought to be erased by moving them elsewhere, by bulldozing them, and by evicting the inhabitants, squatter settlements are spatial forms which make assertions, which contest dominant relations, and which make the dialectic between the forces of dominance, and those of resistance starkly visible in a way no other medium can do. They are a constant reminder of an unequal society, that has no place for a majority of its people,—and they point to the myopic visions of those who organize spatial forms to represent narrow ends. And they are difficult to ignore, as any urban dweller will testify.

These squatter settlements made of tin, scraps of cardboard, newspapers and rags, hit one with the full force of a sledgehammer. They intrude into individual consciousness at traffic crossings, in public parks, while crossing pavements, while going to work, while coming back from work, or while engaged in leisure activities. They *speak* to us in various ways, they inform us that cities are unequally constructed and maintained, but they also tell us about the urban poor. The inhabitants of these settlements are people who are denied personhood, because they are denied a home, and yet they are people who manage to talk back to both history and geography. Spatial forms of the urban poor, disrupt the coherence of the planned urban landscape, they retaliate, and talk back to history and geography, by making the homelessness of these people dramatically visible, as much as they demonstrate the determination of these people not to be excluded and isolated.

The urban poor make and remake space in way that allows them survival, they seize spaces and reshape in this way the entire urban form. The appropriation of space allows the urban poor to dissolve spatial boundaries set from above. The geographical remapping of the city which follows, symbolizes a political strategy of resistance. Now, all this implies that the spatial dimension of societies, is as important in the study of social resistance, as other modes of inquiry. This is because, the production of space is an inherently political process, it is symbolic of both power and resistance to these symbols of power. An interrogation of spatial representations, thus allows us an entry point into questions of social power and the responses it elicits.

It is however, only very recently, that social theory has begun to take space seriously. Social scientists concerned themselves with time and the temporal unfolding of events. Time was accordingly privileged over space, and history was privileged over geography. 'Space', writes Michael Foucault,

was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the other hand, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic. The use of spatial terms seems to have the air of anti-history. If one

started to talk in terms of space, that meant one was hostile to time. It meant, as the fools say, that one 'denied history'. . . . They didn't understand that [these spatial terms] meant that throwing into relief of processes needless to say of power.<sup>1</sup>

Where space was considered, it was in terms of physical attributes, such as boundaries, frontiers, scale nation-states, regions, towns, rural areas. Social theory accordingly proceeded as if events took place on 'the head of a pin', and space and spatial analysis had been left to geographers.

Within geography two traditions predominated, one was the materialist tradition set by Newton. Newton believed that space is a physical and an empirical entity, which is absolute and infinite. It is a boundless receptacle which may or may not be filled with objects. This space is detached from experiences and objects. For Newton, 'Space composed of points and a time composed of instances existed independently of the bodies and events that occupied them'<sup>2</sup> Space, to Newton, was fixed, isotropic and three dimensional. This notion of space still continues to guide much work in geography.

The other tradition was the idealist one set by a professor of geography, Emmanuel Kant. To Kant space is a mental construct; an *a priori* of knowledge; a quality of mind which makes knowledge possible. Human beings structure their experiences by projecting spatiality and temporality upon the world. Thus, though space is empirically real, it can be comprehended only through thought. Thus the mainstream tendency has been to think of space either as pre-given or as a mental construct. This precluded the notion that space is socially produced, or that it is the result of human actions.

Sharp criticism of the above delineated perspectives,<sup>3</sup> has generated fresh insights into the dialectical nature of space. Space is now, considered to be, not only the material context for human activity, but as also the product of human activity, and which in turn, fashions activity. Thus space, it can be argued, is socially produced and socially mediated.<sup>4</sup> It, at any given time is the product of social processes, and historically created space moulds and influences these processes. Everyday lives of individuals are thus shaped by their relationship to their spaces.<sup>5</sup> The assertion of space in social theory thus provides, a much needed theoretical and political context for any discussion on social practices. As the distinguished literary critic Fredric Jameson argues, 'a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organising concern'.<sup>6</sup>

Simply put, these insights allow us to understand that since space is a social construct, human beings etch spaces with their own version of power relations. Spatial forms, in effect, symbolize the power arrangements of a society. For instance, if as Marx wrote, the spatial



representation of feudalism is the handmill,—the spatial representation of the industrial city is its factory chimneys and workers housing. Equally, the spatial representation of the post-industrial city, is its towers which house management and informational structures, segmented and differentiated residential localities, and luxury areas.

But here we arrive at another crucial dimension, power is not fixed or stable at any particular moment in time. Certainly, at a particular moment in history, a particular set of social relations acquire hegemony. They thus define society at that moment. But power is constantly mediated both by other power equations, seeking to impose their own versions of social meaning, or by oppositional struggles which contest existing social meanings. The former is the stuff of what is popularly called the circulation of elites, the latter is the subject matter of revolutions. The point is not only that assertions are accompanied by resistance, but that assertions and contestations are simultaneous events, since they take place within the same historical moment. Now history can accommodate a plurality of social processes of assertions and contestations in the same time frame. History is about such pluralities, and it is sometimes only in retrospective, that historians can decide which of these trends was the decisive moment. *But when contradictory events take place in space, they are not only immediately visible, they change the spatial form itself.* Contestation over the spatial form is discernible, it is simultaneous and therefore—, it provides an indication of not only assertion, but contestation over power in society. Michael Foucault reminds us, while the use of temporal metaphors helps us to tap questions of individual consciousness, the effort to 'decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power'.<sup>7</sup> I will seek to illustrate this point while looking at the Indian city.

Cities are crucial as spatial constructs, because they condense and signify the affirmation and the contestation of power relations of that society, and they do so because they concentrate within the same constricted geographical boundaries, the processes of production, and those of appropriation of space. Cities are thus made and remade within the same spatial and temporal moment, one has to but see how the construction of say, luxury housing is paralleled by the construction of a shanty town within the same geographical parameters. City landscapes are thus designed by two parallel, yet contradictory processes, destined to be in a state of civil war with each other. These appropriations by the urban poor, in substantial ways alter the spatial form as it was intended and planned, conceptualized and designed. Now, if one was looking at simply the processes by which the urban

poor overturn dominant class projects, the story would stop here. It would be one more saga in the narrative of subaltern resistance.

But there is more, as a social scientist, one has to look at the consequences of spatial reordering for the social order. The processes by which the urban poor have taken up and altered planned space, those processes which force the urban poor to do so because the way cities are designed excludes them, have also thrown into sharp relief, the problem inherent in the kind of unintended urban order, that results from the production and appropriation of space.

Several themes present themselves here, for instance, what kind of city is being constructed, what is the culture of these squatter settlements, what is the nature of the resistances that arise there, and what is the overall implication for the urban social project. I will concentrate on just one issue, that is the relation between production and reproduction. For modern, capitalist, *urban* societies are not only about economic production, they are about the creation of societies and a social order which is appropriate to the modes of economic production.

I suspect that the construction of particular economic forms which facilitate economic exchanges, may be infinitely easier than the constitution of an urban social order which fits the definition of something which can be called modern. A definite kind of society; a modern capitalist society, is much more than just the creation and consolidation of a certain way of producing things. It involves the construction of roles, it involves the insertion of people into predictable and safe ways of thinking and behaving, it involves the construction and constitution of communities and individuals, it involves disciplinary mechanisms as the researches of Foucault have showed us, it involves civilized behaviour, above all it simply involves the 'socialization' of people into the the values of capitalist societies. The great philosopher Hegel used the word *bildung*, in this connection, *bildung* to the philosopher means acculturation, it means education and it means socialization. People need to relate to each other on grounds of trust, and trust arises when individuals act in an anticipated manner. Society needs mythologies, it needs ideologies and it needs values. These values and these mythologies have to be shared and shared alike, by the dominant and the dominated classes, a project conceptualized by Antonio Gramsci as hegemony.

The most difficult task is the construction of world views, that can hold and weld, utterly disparate, and conflictual classes and social groups within the same cognitive and ideological framework. How can the working class be brought to view the world in the same ideological perspective as the dominant capitalist classes? Historians of the modern West have shown us how the working class was controlled, disciplined, and socialized into dominant norms in various ways. The main way in which it could be disciplined, and the way it could learn

to relate to others, was by the value of private property. How the work force is housed has a lot to do with the way it is integrated into the social order.

It is not surprising, that in the West, government sponsored housing has been prompted both by the need to pacify a rebellious work force, as well as to create and inculcate the values of private property. The value of private property does not only mean possession, but the need to work steadily in order to keep this property. The ideological need of privileging law, property and social order, have moved states into the arena of reproduction. And the state as the provider of items of collective consumption, has become central to the capitalist project. This serves to integrate the workers into the values and ethos of capitalism, even if the provision of these items of collective consumption, have led to one crisis after another for the state, and undermined the very logic of capitalism by creating what Clauss Offe calls non-commodified sectors.

But in India, though the unorganized working class that forms the majority of the urban poor, has been profitably used for production purposes, (in fact it can be argued that the informal unregulated economy subsidizes the formal economy, by the provision of cheap, non-unionized labour), it has been largely ignored for the purposes of reproduction. Neither the state, nor the capitalist classes who profitably use the labour, and the informal economy housed in these squatter settlements, have concerned themselves with the way these workers are housed, or the manner in which they do, or do not have access to amenities. The space of reproduction of the unorganized working class in India, does not lie in state sponsored projects of housing and services, but in areas where individuals reproduce themselves without any help from the state.

These are areas which house those workers who labour in the sweat shops of the informal economy, and those workers who are not united in trade unions which demand minimal standards of life for their members. Squatter settlements, reproduce these workers at little cost to the state. The urban poor are forced to do for themselves, what the state or capital does not, and thereby they reorder the map of the city in different ways. They have been forced to do so, because housing the urban poor is not the focus of state attention, and whatever housing has come up is regularization of whatever has been already achieved by the urban poor themselves. States have had to back site—and—service schemes, and organize squatter upgrading programmes. They have, in effect, had to recognize *fait accompli*'s. This has its own contradictions and consequences for the urban project, consequences which may be antithetical to the basic values of urban modern society. These values it can be emphasized, are antithetical not only from the point of view of the state, but also from the point of view of any theory of social transformation.

For one, this means, that much of land in the Indian city, is *occupied* land, it is strictly speaking illegal land. The magnitude of this occupation can be judged from the fact that, it has been estimated that more than half the urban dwellers in the Continent of Asia, live in squatter settlements.<sup>8</sup> In Bombay one fifth of the population of Greater Bombay lives in such settlements.<sup>9</sup> In Madras one-third of the population lives in slums and squatter settlements.<sup>10</sup> In 1951 it was estimated that there were 199 such settlements in Delhi, in 1983, the DDA in a survey revealed that there are 534 clusters, composed of 1,13,386 households which can be termed as slums and squatter settlements.<sup>11</sup> The squatter may or may not own his shack, but not the land, this land may be that of absentee landlords, but most often it is public land, which was meant for other *planned* uses.

The fact of occupation, dissolves the fact of ownership, it dissolves the original objectives that land was targeted for, and dissolves the distinctions between public and private spaces. *This is the critical dimension of the urban in India.* Space becomes in these conditions a matter of ideological contestation, for that reason the distinction between the intended and the unintended city, both reflects and affects the urban social order. It for instance, undermines the dominant conceptions of how land should be transferred and inherited. Lawyers, estate brokers and judicial decisions are irrelevant in the allocation, the distribution of, the land use patterns, and the inheritance of land. In Bombay for example, pavements are transferred by a complex and a mind boggling system. *Occupation, in this system constitutes ownership, a concept which is contrary to all accepted notions of property, and the very sanctity of property.* The entrepreneur who organizes the seizure of land, or the occupant who organizes its transfer to his kinsmen or his progeny, acts contrary to the basic precepts of property relations. A completely different system of land and property rights has emerged, which subverts the dominant ethos and interrogates dominant values and their codification in law.

Secondly in building cities which have no place for the urban poor, states have had to face the much more difficult question of what kind of social order they are creating. We can put this question in the following manner—does urbanization lead to urbanism as a way of life possessed by modern capitalist societies? Modernization theory which held sway over much of the post-colonial world in the immediate aftermath of independence thought so.<sup>12</sup> The proponents of this theory argued that the way to a progressive society is urbanization, industrialization, migration from the enclosed worlds of rural societies, and the creation of secular, modern societies. Urbanism as a way of life, follows the construction of urbanization. Urbanism denotes freedom of choice, in contrast to the constraints present in rural societies, marked by ascriptive privileges and codes of conduct. The modern man, Daniel Lerner, reminded us in the *Transitional Society*, is

a newspaper reader, a voter and a consumer, in other words the modern man is obviously an inhabitant of urban areas. And the urban man, is a self disciplined man, he learns to control human passions, he learns to bring his egoism and his desires into congruence with the rest of the people, he learns to leave others alone, he learns to be anonymous and faceless.

However, the kind of society that has emerged in the squatter settlements is not a natural derivative of something called urban. People are buffered from the harshness of deprivation, not by the state, but by their own networks of social ties grounded in occupied space, and the non-regulated economy. This means that squatter settlements, cities of peasants or rural slums as they are disparagingly called, have spawned culture and modes of life different to the dominant one. An influential stream of thinking, no doubt inspired by the perspective of the moral economy of the peasant, has glamorized these areas, as marked by the formation of community networks, and face to face interactions, in contrast to the commodified, impersonal, contractual relationships of urban society. They therefore, pose both a challenge to the dominant ethos, as well as provide an alternative.

But here we must pause, a closer look informs us, that these areas are not the rural utopias that operate outside the commodity networks of capitalist society. They are not only characterized by the formation of caste and community networks, but also by patronage networks, and clientilism. If the shanty town dweller can count on his caste or community associations for help, he is helpless before the slum lord, the political patron, and the entrepreneur who encourages the take over of land and makes housing into a commodity. These areas of brutal exploitation and despair are a telling commentary on the kind of urban social order that results. They just do not conform to the idea of the urban arena, as progressive and forward looking as the theorists of modernity had assured us.

But there is another factor that has to be emphasized. In the absence of state sponsored reproduction, it is not a stable organized and ordered wage labour force that has been created, but a vast urban mass, which is uncontrolled and dangerously autonomous of all disciplinary mechanisms. For one, the class of the urban poor, embraces a variety of people, with different positions in the productive structure: the worker, the slum lord, the small employer of a sweat shop, the independent artisan, the trader, the manufacturer of illicit liquor. The inhabitants of the squatter settlement, cover a range of occupations and affiliations, they are not only the dispossessed proletariat. Secondly, it had been theorized, that the formation of the working class would take place primarily in the formal economic sector. This sector would bring people together in conditions where working class consciousness would be forged and cemented. The revolutionary class of Marxist theory, is the organised working class. However, the inhabitants of

the squatter settlements, engaged in the informal economy, share an ambivalent and contradictory relationship to the concepts of capital and labour. They are united by a shared experience of poverty and deprivation, but just poverty and deprivation, as history has shown, does not create a revolutionary proletariat.

Certainly as the urban poor become increasingly conscious of the gaps dividing them from other better off sections, resentment creates dense networks of bonds, among those who are deprived, whether they are underpaid workers, the self-employed, the job seekers united by poverty and oppression. It also means that the seizure of a piece of land, the negotiations over the recognition of that land, or at least the attempts to prevent demolition, the mobilization of community and political networks to protect that land, can translate into popular rage. But popular rage can be negative. In Sub-Saharan Africa, popular rage periodically transforms itself into food riots, which has shaken governments. But such rage is seldom conducive to building creatively, and destroying oppression, which is the stuff of revolutionary politics.

This is not the classic proletariat which seeks control over the means of production for another reason. The movements emerging from these areas concentrate on items of consumption instead of control over their conditions of work. Squatter settlements pressurize city administrations, for consumer facilities, such as lowering of bus rates, provision of ration cards, for regularization, and for water and electricity. Now struggles over items of collective consumption, cannot be transformative for various reasons, of which I highlight just two. Firstly, struggles over consumption, are not struggles over the possession of the proprietorial relations of society, but struggles over distribution. This means that the production structures of that society go unchallenged. Secondly, as people become dependent on the state for the provision of collective goods, they become vulnerable as far as the decisions of the state are concerned. All over the post-colonial world, as states have moved back from subsidies in food or transport rates in response to the dictates by the world bank and the IMF, the urban poor have become the first victims of the economic liberalisation process.

There is a related problem, the demand for consumption goods, means that promises of betterment can mobilize the urban poor, in the causes of corrupt and status-quoist political leaderships. In India vote banks have been built up by the most venal of politicians, by virtue of these promises. Struggles are again diverted from the issue of who owns the resources of society, and how these resources are used, to issues of distribution. Ownership becomes simply a non issue. Equally, in India, this vast uncontrolled urban mass has contributed to reactionary, communal and criminalized politics. The entrepreneurship that gives rise to these settlements, also gives rise to captive vote banks, urban warlords, lumpen activity, illegal brewing and distilling. If on the one hand they force the state to move into areas of distribution, equally

the populations of these areas can be mobilized for communal causes. The herding together of people into dense and inhospitable spaces, creates social tensions which can erupt at a moment's notice. Squatter settlements have become centres of social tensions, instead of utopias which can create community networks and self help organizations.

The failure of the state to fix its working classes into direct relationship with capital and the state, or to tie an urban population to space, as a precondition of their regular participation in a disciplined wage labour force, has bred problems both for state policies, as well as for politics of social transformation. The problem with squatter settlements is not only that it reproduces the work force cheaply, but that it reproduces a work force that is dangerously anarchic and autonomous of any moderating influence of either mainstream politics, or of working class cultures. Resultantly, the spatial form of the city becomes a cauldron. The temperature in this cauldron is critical because social processes happen so near to each other, a crisis in one can lead to a crisis in the other. Indian cities continue to be the hotbeds of tension. Indian planners have created the wrong kind of city, and the wrong kind of urban culture. The celebrated poet Iqbal once wrote, men of vision build cities, the Indian city however testifies to the myopia of urban planners, and even more to the myopia of the social order. And in the meanwhile as control over the city continues, appropriated cities do not give way to regenerated, humane spaces, but brutalized and inhuman spaces. The appropriation of space breeds its own problems.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Michael Foucault, *Knowledge/Power* (1980. Brighton, Harvester), p. 149.
2. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (1961. London. Georg Allen and Unwin), p. 525.
3. Manuel Castells an influential Marxist geographer, has made a sharp critique of these hegemonic traditions in geography. In *The Urban Question: A Marxist Perspective* (1977. London. Edwin Arnold), he argues that there has been a tendency among geographers, to think of space as either a natural and given entity which influences human action, or as something which is fashioned by thought. To Castells, nature and culture are linked together in a dialectical process of historical developments. David Harvey, another very influential Marxist geographer, has contributed enormously to understanding the spatial form as the outcome of dominant class practices, *Harvey Social Justice and the City* (1973. London Edward-Arnold); *Limits to Capital* (1982. Oxford Basil Blackwell); *The Urbanization of Capital* (1985. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press); *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989. Oxford Basil Blackwell). Also see Doreen Massey *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (1984. Basingstoke. Macmillan); Neil Smith *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. (1984. Oxford. Basil Blackwell). These theoretical interventions have led in

the direction of problematizing space both in geography as well as in other social science traditions.

4. Space has made a major come back to social theory in postmodernism. Postmodern theory resonates with predominantly spatial terms such as site, location, place, situated and grounded. See among others, Edward Soja *Post Modern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. (1989. London. Verso), also Jon Bird et al. ed in *Mapping the Futures, Local Cultures, Global Change*. (1993. London. Routledge).
5. The increasing importance of space to social theory can be traced to the fact, that social inquiry has moved away from grand aspatial categories of analysis, to more specific concrete studies of human action, which are located both temporally and spatially. One major factor that has contributed to this trend is the emergence of new social movements, which concentrate on locality specific issues, such as ecology.
6. Fredric Jameson—'Postmodern, or the cultural logic of capitalism' *New Left Review* 1984, No. 146, p. 71, 89.
7. Michael Foucault 'Questions of Geography' in *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1973* ed C Gordon (New York Pantheon). p. 69-70.
8. Squatter settlements are known by various names across the Continents of Asia, Latin America and Asia. In India they are known as 'jhuggi-jhopris' or 'bustees'; in Argentina as 'villas miserias'; in Mexico as 'colonias proletarias'; in Morocco as 'bidonvilles'; in Turkey as 'gecekondus'; as 'favelas' in Brazil and as 'callampas' in Chile.
9. Desai, A.R. and Pillai S.D., *Slums and Urbanization in Bombay* (1972, University of Bombay).
10. Arangannal, R., *Socio-Economic Survey of Madras Slums* (1975, Madras, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board.)
11. See Anup Basu *Urban Squatter Housing in Third World*. (1988. New Delhi. Mittal Publications)
12. Theorists of modernity and its malaise, Hegel, Weber, Simmel, Freud, mourned the loss of community, and communitarian ties, and were deeply skeptical of what Weber referred to as the instrumental rationality of modern life. And the modern was almost always associated with the urban. Theorist of the urban, particularly Simmel concentrated on the problems and the disenchantments of urban life and existence, alienation, homelessness, rootlessness, psychological disorders and the sheer loneliness of the urban city dweller. It was accepted that the city promised freedoms not allowed by face to face communities, but it was also recognized that urban living gave rise to disorders and ailments which were peculiar to that particular kind of existence. In contrast to the theorists of modernity of the West, India as much as the post-colonial world under the influence of modernization theorists welcomed urbanism and urbanization as progressive and liberating. The city with its infinite promises of employment, its anonymity, and its impersonal social contacts would breed the modern individual emancipated from the ties of caste or community affiliations. Urbanization was the near perfect solution to caste and religious oppression and, the general problems of backwardness.



## *Stalin's Russia*

Chris Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, Edward Arnold, Hodder and Stoughton, London and New York, 1993, pp. 232, price not stated.

'History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors, and issues deceive with whispering ambitions, guides us by vanities. Think now, she gives when our attention is distracted, and what she gives, give with supple confusions, that the giving famishes the craving....'<sup>1</sup>

Chris Ward's book is an outstanding historical work. As he says 'history has a different way of looking at things a way of thinking about vanished meanings' (p. 1) . . . . It has been superbly documented (on an average 50-100 references or footnotes per page!) relying on both pre-*glasnost* and post-*glasnost* sources (i.e. archives) though the latter have not yet been exhausted especially for foreigners and only for a select group of Russians. The pre-*glasnost* sources are mainly *Pravda*, *Izvestiya*, *Za Industrializatsiya* (For Industrialization,) *Trud* (labour) and stenographic records of party congresses and conferences. The post-*glasnost* sources, as mentioned before have been used in a haphazard way and no systematic research has yet been undertaken especially for the republics and for the highly sensitive period of the 1930s (p.5).

The book has been organized as follows: (a) Stalin's early career and the circumstances that led to the rise of his power, (b) his attitude towards NEP, the industrialization debate and the relationship between collectivization and industrialization (chs. 2-3). Chapter four deals with perhaps the most controversial question relating to purges and politics, finally the last two chapters deal mainly with his role in World War II and culture and society in the USSR.

Consider briefly the contents of each chapter in turn, after which we shall examine, to quote Stalin, the 'errors of Chris Ward and the other errors of Chris Ward.'<sup>2</sup>

---

\* Centre for Russian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Iosif Stalin (derived from the Russian *Stal* (man of steel) real name being Iosif a Vissiarionvich Dzugzhivili was born in Georgia on 9 December 1879 and died in Moscow on 5 March 1953. He joined the RSDSR in 1898 soon after which he was expelled. His role in the October Revolution was relatively insignificant (pp. 7-8).

After Lenin's serious of strokes between 1921 and 1924 a 'trimuarte' comprising Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev came to 'power' in order to prevent Trotsky from assuming Lenin's role (p.11). Trotsky only had the support of the so-called group of 46—both Bukharin and Stalin accused him of factionalism (*loc cit*). According to the author Stalin indulged in machinations against Trotsky—firstly, by attacking his theory of the permanent revolution and arguing quite rightly in one's opinion that 'socialist construction in backward Russia was possible even if final victory was impossible without international revolution' (pp. 12-13).

Unfortunately, the author adopts the orthodox and simplistic point of view that Stalin first defeated the Left opposition and then the Right and finally rose to power. As we shall argue later, the picture is more complex—however, first let us examine the author's views. The Left opposition was defeated in the following way—firstly Trotsky was humiliated, Kamenev and Zinoviev were expelled from the Politburo at the 15th Party Congress, violent speeches by Stalin and Bukharin (condemning the notion of permanent revolution), Trotsky was heard in silence, Kamenev was persistently interrupted and Zinoviev heckled. Subsequently Trotsky was sent to Alma-Ata and later exiled. He died in Mexico on 21 August 1940, ostensibly killed by an NKVD agent.

We now turn our attention to the defeat of the Right, Bukharin spoke angrily against the subversion of NEP in 1928—in October of the same year Stalin spoke against the dangers of Right opportunism—Bukharin (editor of *Pravda*) began to slip from his grasp. In January 1929 Stalin convened a joint session of the Central Committee and accused the Right of factionalism—Tomsin and Rykov were accused of holding clandestine meetings with Bukharin and Stalin referred to Bukharin's differences with Lenin (pp. 16-18). Bukharin was finally 'ousted from the Politburo and the editorship of *Pravda*' (*loc.cit*).

What then were the factors that led to Stalin's rise to power?

The author categorizes them as follows: (i) the Trotskyist explanation which can hardly be taken seriously—i.e. 'Stalin was an Asiatic—he had no racial attributes but a blending of grit, shrewdness and craftiness, . . . which has been the characteristic of Asia' (p.19). Later the author admits that 'specialists regard this as one of Trotsky's mistakes—he seriously underestimated Stalin's qualities . . . quoting Lunacharski who said that 'Trotsky's nonchalant high and mighty way of speaking to all and sundry . . . and be inattentive to people' (*loc cit*).

Secondly, Stalin was a past-master at *administrativanie* Carr has aptly summarised this phenomenon as follows: 'Bolshevism's administrative apparatus . . . in the final analysis was a triumph not of reason but of organization' (p. 21). Many authors describe how Stalin's power and influence led to the construction of the USSR—a centralized polity in which all roads led to the Kremlin'. (*op.cit*)

Thus as Robert Daniels, argues there was a 'circular flow of power'. . . when it came to a showdown Trotsky or Bukharin might win the argument but Stalin invariably won the vote' (*loc cit*).

The administrative approach overlaps with the historical approach—for instance, Lenin emphasised that the working class could never carry through a revolution unaided—a view taken by Merk Fainsod amongst others, as we shall see later.

Other explanations regarding Stalin's rise to power are ideological and socio-cultural. Regarding the former, the General Secretary (i.e. Stalin) was not so much an opportunist, but a politician balancing between extremes (p.26). Regarding the latter a spectacular event took place in the party i.e. the Lenin enrollment of-1924 (p.28).

To summarize: 'no single factor can explain Stalin's rise to power. What one is dealing with are not mutually exclusive explanations but overlapping hypotheses which cannot be easily be prioritized.

In chapters 2 and 3 the author deals with the relationship between collectivization and industrialization,—since the two processes are closely interrelated we shall deal with them together.

The author begins his narrative on collectivization by saying the *smychka* was under great strain from 1927 onwards. The *muzhiki* (peasantry) reduced grain sales—there was little point in trading food, etc for useless roubles (p. 39).

By early 1928 *NEP* was drawing to a close. In January 1928 Stalin visited Siberia and his observations ought to be quoted in full as follows:

In January 1928 the General Secretary visited Siberia. Despite reports of substantial yields sales to state agencies were dismally low prompting allusions to nefarious 'kulak gentry' and the looming peril of undersupply. 'You have had a bumper harvest', he told party administrators,

one might say a record one. Your grain surpluses this year are bigger than ever before. Yet the plan for grain procurements is not being fulfilled. Why? What is the reason? . . . Look at the kulak farms: their barns and sheds are crammed with grain; grain is lying open under pent roofs for lack of storage space . . .

You say that the kulaks are unwilling to deliver grain, that they are waiting for prices to rise, and prefer to engage in unbridled speculation. That is true. But the kulaks . . . are demanding an increase in prices to three times those fixed by the government. . .

But there is no guarantee that the kulaks will not again sabotage the grain procurements next year. More, it may be said with certainty that so long as there are kulaks, so long will there be sabotage of grain procurements.' (p.41)

As the exercise was repeated across the country, Stalin tightened the screws still further: After the 1928 harvest the Ural-Siberian method was used fearing that bread shortages would increase in anticipation of better prices for the peasantry. Bukharin was frantic to preserve the *Snytkha* at all costs; Stalin argued that cheap grain was an essential prerequisite of the first *piatiletka* (first five year plan—1FYP), investment funds could not be diverted from industry to appease Kulaks.

Bukharin played his last card in his defence in publishing his famous 'Notes of an Economist' on 30 September 1928—a criticism of Stalin's policies and a defence of NEP's economic strategy. By December 1928, the situation had become desperate and rationing was introduced.

By 1929, NEP was in ruins and Stalin launched the slogan 'the year of the great breakthrough' calling for a drive against the Kulaks (rural capitalists)<sup>3</sup> and all out industrialization, and collectivization.

Regarding Stalin's role in World War II, he clearly underestimated the role of *Wehrmacht*, though Ward defends the Soviet Nazi-German non-aggression pact as England and France did nothing and were interested in pushing Nazi Germany eastwards—even the worst enemies of Stalin admit this—e.g. Roy Medvedev—*Let History Judge*, London 1973—i.e. Stalin simply had no alternative. The author has however, some reservations on the secret protocols of the treaty; however, to the reviewer this is a minor matter.

The author then briefly discusses some of major battles of World War II i.e. Moscow (1941), Leningrad (1941-44), Stalingrad (1942-43) and Kursk—Orel (1943—the first summer victory for the Russians)—the greatest tank battle in history involving 6,000 tanks and 5,000 aircraft. Russian losses were staggering in World War II 26-28 million dead—more than half were civilian casualties—in contrast Americans had no civilian casualties!

Finally, on the origins of the cold war, the author argues convincingly that the responsibility lies clearly with the Western and American side—a feature clearly documented by late A.J.P. Taylor,<sup>4</sup> Gunter Muinhrup,<sup>5</sup> Rajni Palm Dutt's review of Fleming's classical work—*The Cold War and its Origins*. On the question of the division of Germany (i.e. now ex-GDR), Minnrup states clearly that Stalin was against the division of Germany—he simply had one aim—defeat Germany and create a united but neutral Germany.<sup>6</sup> However the American attitude forced Stalin's attitude to change it every step since 1948 onwards.<sup>7</sup>

In short, it was not Stalin's stand to gobble up Eastern European Soviet power and tanks simply moved into a vacuum—according to Taylor.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, we turn our attention to Stalin's contribution to culture and society in the USSR.

To begin with 'schools were handed over to collective farms or factories—students were mobilized to fulfil the plan—universities and polytechnics were no less affected by ballicose nationalism' (pp. 190-191).

The second major change related to nationality and ethnicity, 1928 witnessed the growth of a vigorous anti-religious drive—both against Christianity and Islam—i.e. against the Orthodox Church and particularly against Islam—out of approximately 27,000 mosques functioning in 1923 these were reduced to 1312 (p. 194). The republics involved were Kazakhstan, Tadgzikistan, Turkestan, Krighizia and Uzbekistan.

Regarding literature, science and the arts, beginning in 1929 it was dominated by RAPP (an abbreviation for the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers—the parameters of 'socialist realism' were defined in 1934—Stalin approved Gladkov's *Cement*, Mikhail Sholokov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, Gorky's *Mother* (p. 199-200). In short, between 1941 and 1945 literature was subsumed against the struggle against Hitler.

Regarding art and music, it is interesting to quote an incident: Stalin walked out of Shostakovitch's concert (needless to say the senior Shostakovitch was one of Russia's outstanding composers) saying 'nonsense instead of music' (p.20)—the author has translated Stalin's remark somewhat inaccurately.

He then examines the problem of *zhadanovschina* (named after Zhadanov) when Lysenko reached the zenith of his power. Science was divided into two parts: 'bourgeois and scientific' (p. 244).

Zhadanov died in 1948 but his legacy continued—Stalin published *Marxism* and *On The Question of Linguistics*.<sup>9</sup>

The author then examines the problem of 'totalitarianism revisited'—he was totalitarian in all aspects—ideology, culture and society, politics and economics, state, etc, in order to assert his authority—in short an 'authoritarian polity' (p.211).

Secondly, on the whole, the process of *vyvideshnie* (promotion of party cadres) was a negative phenomenon, it had some positive features—e.g. Gromyko was taught to read by the party, Khrushchev began his career as a technical student and later became Deputy Minister—all this was in sharp contrast to the concept of the old Leninist elite (p.222).

Ward concludes by emphasising the failures of history—much of the problem lies in the failure to use archival sources which hopefully

will be opened soon to western scholars—the history of Stalin's Russia is only just beginning" (*loc.cit.* sic!)

#### THE ERRORS OF CHRIS WARD

(i) Regarding the question of the Cold War and its origins, we have already dealt with this question and it is unnecessary to go into the question further.

(ii) On the question of purges and politics the so-called Kirov affair is the most controversial. On the one hand, he categorically asserts that Stalin had Kirov murdered during the period of *Ezho'skhina*, which was followed by waves of mass arrests, executions, Gulag Camps etc. On the other hand, quoting A. Getty's 'bombshell' work of 1985 (*On the Question of the Great Purge*, CUP) he says that he is unconvinced about Stalin's involvement. Here, it may not be out of place to mention that three biographies of Stalin appeared in the West in the 70s—by Adam Ulam and Robert Tucker (Harvard University) and Ronald Hingley (Oxford) all of whom could not find a shred of evidence that Kirov was murdered by a young man named Nekolayev of the Leningrad Party organisation.

A similar parallel exists with regard to Ordzhonikidze who held the key post of the commissariat of heavy industry. Ward says he died of a heart attack; however, quoting from Khrushchev's secret speech to the CPSU in 1956 he says Ordzhonikidze committed suicide, which version should one believe?

Finally, Ward is at times far too uncritical of Trotsky's works—he quotes extensively from *The Revolution of Betrayed* (1936) and from his so-called last testament—both of which are rather poor works—rich in sentiment but poor in understanding.

#### THE OTHER ERRORS OF CHRIS WARD

In dealing with the relationship between collectivization and industrialization he somewhat cursorily deals with Barsov, Ellman's and to some extent with my work where he fails to emphasize that the bulk of *accumulation* came from the working class and only *partly* (albeit in a very *crucial* form) from the peasantry (food, labour power and raw materials).

Secondly, he quotes somewhat misleadingly from Davies (1980) and (1989). Davies whom Ward refers to as the 'foremost economic historian of Soviet Russia' (an opinion with which one fully agrees) said in 1980: 'between 1929 and 1936 the USSR was transformed into a major industrial power; in terms of speed and scale it has neither precedent nor successor anywhere in the world, and in 1936 with the elimination of hired labour and profit a kind of socialist economy had been created', (*op.cit.* p.xv).

Similarly in his (1989) work Davies points out several errors made by the so-called 'anti-Stalinists' writing in the *glasnost* period. For instance intense pressures for rapid industrialization came from within the Party reflected in several drafts of the IFYP from 1927 onwards. He says 'all this is quite wrong' (i.e. to blame Stalin alone—emphasis mine).<sup>10</sup> Ward makes no reference to this point.

In the reviewer's opinion, the most balanced view of Stalin is summarised by E.H. Carr: 'Stalin's early career is so shrouded in mystery and no exact account will ever be recovered. . . . In 1923, Lunacharsky, in his sketches of party leaders, omitted Stalin altogether, Kamenev thought of him as just a 'small politician', while Trotsky called him 'an outstanding mediocrity of the party.'

Further insights can be found in the correspondence between E.H. Carr and Davis (1984). Carr writes to Davies thus: 'I am glad to learn that you are not one of those who like Trotsky (and his cronies—*my emphasis*) are not simply interested in 'throwing stones at Stalin.' Rather you are more interested in understanding and explaining as to why and how collectivization and industrialization took place. . . .

Carr concludes as follows:

Stalin's role in history thus remains paradoxical and in some sense contradictory. He carried out, in face of every obstacle and opposition, the industrialization of his country through intensive planning and thus not only paid tribute to the validity of Marxist theory, but ranged the Soviet Union as an equal partner among the Great Powers of the western world. In virtue of this achievement he takes his undisputed place both as one of the great executors of the Marxist testament and one of the great westernizers in Russian history. Yet this *tour de force* had, when studied and analysed, a supremely paradoxical character. Stalin laid the foundations of the proletarian revolution on the grave of Russian capitalism, but through a deviation from Marxist premisses so sharp as to amount almost to a rejection of them. He westernized Russia, but through a revolt, partly conscious, partly unconscious, against western influence and authority and a reversion to familiar national attitudes and traditions. The goal to be attained and the methods adopted or proposed to attain it often seemed in flagrant contradiction—a contradiction which in turn reflected the uphill struggle to bring a socialist revolution to fruition in a backward environment. Stalin's ambiguous record was an expression of this dilemma. He was an emancipator and a tyrant; a man devoted to a cause, yet a personal dictator; and he consistently displayed a ruthless vigour which issued, on the one hand, in the extreme boldness and determination and, on the other, in extreme brutality and indifference to human suffering. The key to these ambiguities cannot be found in the man himself. The initial verdict of those who

failed to find in Stalin any notable distinguishing marks had some justification. Few great men have been so conspicuously as Stalin the product of the time and place in which they lived.<sup>12</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Except from T.S. Eliot's 'Gerontion', Faber and Faber, London 1954, pp. 51-54.
2. It should be obvious to the reader that I am referring half-jocularly to one of Stalin's famous works strangely enough not quoted by the author, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, M. 1953 where he refers to the 'errors of Comrade Yaroshenko and the other errors of Comrade Yaroshenkou'. According to my esteemed Ukrainian colleague Andrei Vernikov, Yaroshanko was still alive till quite late and earlier both Stalin and Yaroshanko gave interviews and both were wrong! This puts paid to the hypothesis that Yaroshenko was a fictitious figure created by Stalin!
3. More precisely 'medium rich capitalist farmers, money-lenders, etc. Literally in Russian, 'Kulak' means 'clinchd fist'—implying their socio-political as well as their economic power.
4. A.J.P. Taylor; *Illustrated History of the Second World War*, London, 1989. Taylor says 'I have consulted all possible sources and . . . the second World War was a good war. My country fought on the right side . . .'
5. See Gunter Minnrup: 'GDR's frozen revolution' *New Left Review*, April-June 1982.
6. G. Munnerup, *op.cit.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Taylor, *op.cit.* He says one of the myths created by history was that the Yalta conference earmarked the so-called 'spheres of influence'—between Eastern and Western Europe!
9. A well-known as a scholarly and non-dogmatic work.
10. Danies says 'the view that no industrialization however at the pace between 1929 and 1936 was incompatible with a market relationship between the state and the peasantry' (1980, p. XV), similarly in his 1989 work; *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, he points out the ambitious 1929 FYP was being prepared in various drafts as early as 1927 and that contemporary historians of the Gorbachev period are all wrong. In condemning Stalin, Ward makes no reference to this fact.
11. See 'Drop the Glass Industry'. Collaborating with E.H. Cair by R.W. Davies, *New Left Review*, June 1984.
12. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, 1924-26, Vol. 1, pp. 189-202. Incidentally, at the end of each chapter Ward has provided of essential readings which are very useful. Thus I have kept the notes and references to the minimum.



## *Advaita's Waterloo*

Ramchandra Gandhi, *Sita's Kitchen: A Testimony of Faith and Inquiry*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 127, Rs. 85

In the long history of India as a civilization, the honour of her traditions of spirituality and cultural accommodation has many times been put to the test. The history of any civilization can be written as a history of how it has marked the 'other', confronted the alien or the invader, treated the stranger, and defined the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Although the genius of Indian civilization, and her exemplary contribution to the narrative of humankind, may well be *advaita* (non-dualism), an ethic of inclusiveness, a philosophy opposed to the annihilationist destructiveness of the dualism of 'self' and 'other', 'me' and 'you', one moment when India's honour was surely compromised befell the country on 6 December 1992 when a large crowd constituted predominantly of Hindus tore down, in rude and militant defiance not merely of the law but of norms of civility, moral conduct, and cultural pluralism, a sixteenth century mosque—otherwise known as the Babri Masjid—described by certain Hindu organizations and their supporters as having been built on the very spot where a Hindu temple which once stood to commemorate the birthplace of Lord Rama was then demolished to make way for the religious edifice representing the faith of India's new conquerors. As the proponents of the 'temple theory' were keen to argue, such a monument to the enslavement of Hindus, and a perpetual reminder of their subjugation in the land of their birth, could not be allowed to stand; and in place of the mosque, they have insisted, a temple must be installed in resplendent homage to Lord Rama, glorious scion of the Suryavamsi kings and a principal deity of Hinduism. Their ambition has already cost several thousand lives, as the carnage in the wake of the destruction of the mosque indubitably and painfully testifies; moreover, as this ambition has not seen its fruition yet, and a resolution to the problem seems far from being achieved, we can expect the strife, in however attenuated a form, to continue.

---

\* Department of History, University of California, Los Angeles

The conflict over the 'disputed structure', as the Government of India characterizes it, has spawned an enormous literature. The contours of the debate have predictably been determined by proponents and antagonists of the 'temple theory': one side is of the view that the archaeological and historical 'evidence' furnishes irrefutable proof of the existence of a temple at the Rama Janmasthan (birthplace of Rama) before it was brought down and a mosque built partly with its debris; the other side is just as certain that the evidence cannot sustain the aforementioned hypothesis. Beyond the narrow confines of the particular question of whether a temple stood at the site where the Babri Masjid was later erected, the debate has revolved around a series of political, legal, and constitutional considerations. How could the law have been flaunted so easily? Why did the state, which had positioned nearly 20,000 troops in the vicinity of the mosque and around it, remain woefully negligent in the performance of its duty to protect the mosque? To whom should culpability be assigned? For those, inside and outside India, to whom the Indian political scenario represents an unending series of crises, a country once again seemingly on the verge of collapse, the query is easily framed: Will India survive? Or is the country, devoid of 'law and order', bereft (if we are to believe Nirad Chaudhari and his ilk) of the principled and firm hand of India's former guardian class, bound to putrefy in the stink of its (as some believe) 'ageless' hatreds? A somewhat more idealist or philosophical tone has been injected into the literature by those who, confronted by the demise of 'secularism', find in the events leading to, and following, the destruction of the mosque a betrayal of the ideals for which Indian nationalists waged a war of independence against British rule. The future of India as a 'secular' state, where Muslims and other minorities can enjoy the same rights and security as Hindus, appears very much endangered. What is it to be an 'Indian' any more?

Ramchandra Gandhi, an Indian philosopher and independent scholar of considerable repute, has wisely refused to step inside this debate, pitched partially as the confrontation of 'fundamentalism' with 'secularism', or even partake of its terms. That is suggested by the very title of his work, 'Sita's Kitchen', a translation of the more mellifluous and poignant 'Sita-ki-Rasoi', a largely ignored structure which, standing apart from the now-demolished Babri Masjid, nonetheless constitutes a part of the entire complex. It is not that the 'honour' of India is of no concern to Gandhi; rather, he locates it not in a secularism which has little room for faith, but in the overwhelmingly rich and complex traditions of Indian spirituality and religious tolerance. Unlike the secularist antagonists of the 'temple theory', Gandhi had no difficulty, as he stood in front of the mosque and noticed 'the carved lotuses and pillars' supporting the mosque at the bottom, 'and the hexagonal tantric motifs on the walls above the arches and other unmistakably Hindu features of the structure', in admitting that

'sacred components of a Hindu temple (or a cognate Buddhist or Jaina shrine) had been used in the construction of the mosque in the sixteenth century (1528/29).' But that admission, and the feeling of a hurt Hindu pride, scarcely allies him with the 'fundamentalists', for he records the 'stealthy trespass' with which Hindus placed idols in the sanctum sanctorum and so forcibly converted the mosque into a temple forty years ago, and laments the fact that the 'chanting of the names of Rama and Sitā' was used to silence 'nearly half a millennium's call' to the faithful to Islamic prayer (p. 14). To gauge Ramchandra Gandhi's sentiments on the 'Ayodhya question', and more precisely on the question of whether a perceived inquiry to Hinduism in the sixteenth century is to be corrected by a heinous blow to Muslim faith and culture in the late twentieth century, we have only to consider his wonderful invocation of a story from the life of Swami Vivekananda. The famous Indian monk had gone to Kashmir towards the end of his life; anguished over the invader's desecration and destruction of countless images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses, and filled with rage at 'this humiliating testimony of history', he approached the Divine Mother in a Kali temple, and falling at her feet, asked: 'How could you let this happen, Mother, why did you permit this desecration?' On the Swami's own testimony, Kali is reported to have said: 'What is it to you, Vivekananda, if the invader breaks my images. Do you protect me, or do I protect you?' (p. 10). How could have, in the name of Rama, in the cause of perpetuating his glory, the proponents of the Rama Janmabhoomi movement committed such mayhem?

For Gandhi, an understanding of what Ayodhya portends for the future of Indian civilization and traditions of Indian spirituality may be gained by turning our gaze to Sita's Kitchen, which may be conceived as a grove of 'aboriginal spirituality' and 'sacred fertility.' The attention lavished upon the Rama Janmasthan has obfuscated the critical significance of Sita-ki-Rasoi, which Hindu devotees revere just as much as Rama's birthplace. The fact that both are contained within one complex underscores the absurdity not to mention the offensiveness of the claim that the Rama Janmasthan has a transcendent importance: 'what is blasphemous', argues Gandhi, 'is the denial of omnipresence by imposing the task of imaging it exclusively on any one spot in the zone area' (p. 16). 'Neti, neti', 'not this, not this', say the sages of the *Upanishads* when asked to define the Godhead: to say that it is this or that, here or there, is to place limits around the Godhead. Sita-ki-Rasoi is in other respects too emblematic of the generosity of Indian spiritual traditions, a living monument to the catholicity of 'aboriginal spirituality'. As Gandhi imagines Sita-ki-Rasoi, it was not only an actual kitchen from which Sita fed the Raghava clan with 'delicious and nutritious food', a place with an ambience of domesticity and divinity conjoined, but is also evocative of 'the archetypal notion of the earth as the Divine Mother's laboratory

of manifestation and field of nourishment for all self-images of self' (p. 15).

What might Gandhi mean by describing Sita-ki-Rasoi as the 'Divine Mother's laboratory of manifestation', a 'field of nourishment for all self-images of self'? To pursue this line of inquiry, and to open up a liberating space for the interpretation of the events at Ayodhya that would take us away from the restrictive if not emasculating framework of 'fundamentalism' and 'secularism', he offers us—and that takes up the greater part of the book—an extended and magnificently creative interpretation of a Buddhist story. If we are to ask how a narrative drawn from Buddhism illuminates the significance of Sita-ki-Rasoi, we might consider first that Ayodhya has had a long association with Buddhism as well.<sup>1</sup> The motifs on the now-demolished Babri Masjid are common to Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism in all its variety; and the location of the mosque in the 'sacred kitchen zone' suggests the 'kinship of these traditions with aboriginal spirituality' (p. 17). More illuminating still is the story itself. Thirty young men with their wives were once enjoying themselves in a grove; one of them, who was unmarried, was provided with a harlot by the name of Ananya. While this party was amusing itself, the whore decamped with all their belongings. The young men went in search of the woman; while they were roaming around, they ran into the Buddha, sitting at the foot of a tree. Upon approaching him, they asked: 'Pray, Lord, has the Blessed One seen a woman passing by?' The Buddha replied, 'What have you to do, young men, with the woman?' An account of Ananya's mischief is given to the Buddha; he then pointedly asks them, 'Now what think you, young men? Which would be better for you, that you should go in search of a woman, or that you should go in search of yourselves?' The men agree that they should go in search of themselves and to this end they humble themselves before the Buddha as suppliants desirous of instruction in Dharma, the truth (pp. 23-24).

If advaita today has its critics, the Buddha was not without his adversaries either, and they appear in the form of the Ajivika philosophers Ajita Kesakambalin and Makkhali Gosala. Ascetics of great eminence, Gandhi characterizes them as 'nihilists', and has them engage the Buddha and his contemporary Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, in a debate on the nature of right action, the unpredictability of human existence, the fate of advaita, and the future of civilization. It is, not coincidentally, under the ample shade of the banyan tree that the debate takes place: the banyan, like India herself, is all-encompassing, and under this tree all shades of opinion can be entertained, hospitality is denied no one—for the sun shines alike on the thief, the saint, the whore, the woodcutter—, and a wholeness which knows no dualism can become a real possibility. The banyan tree is a perpetual reminder of the reality of advaita. Kesakambalin doesn't occupy the central position under the tree, least

of all because he wishes to defer to the two great sages before him, supremely confident as he is of the rightness of his vision and his intellectual prowess, but rather 'to make the point that he did not believe that there was any centre to anything at all; to drive home the deeper aspect of his eccentricity, i.e. off-centredness.' His companion, Makkhali Gosala, 'swings upside down, bat-like, from one of the branches of the tree 'so as to underscore the upside-downness, topsy-turvyness, of being and becoming, the indignity and irrationality of reality' (p. 31). In a topsy-turvy world, war can masquerade as peace, and ecological annihilationism can be camouflaged as development.

Launching upon a monologue, Kesakambalin mocks the Buddha's advice to the young men. Why should they deny themselves the pleasures of life, forgo what is rightfully theirs (i.e., the goods stolen by the whore), and squander their youth in search of something as elusive and meaningless as the self? Moreover, neither Makkhali nor he has any time for metaphysics and religion, 'Vedic or Vedantic or contemporary': their 'uncompromisingly negative views' on these subjects are well known, and in any case it is rather more interesting to indulge in prophecy. Two and a half to three thousand years from now, says Kesakambalin, the world will be hopelessly divided along socio-economic, ideological, racial, religious, and territorial lines, thus precipitating 'an unprecedented crisis of survival and self-confidence' (p.34). The failure of non-violence is axiomatic, and though violence may not triumph much either, the 'ecologically deprecadatory life-style' that the majority of human beings will come to adopt assures the destruction of the earth (p. 36). All 'social systems are untruthful', argues Kesakambalin, for 'they present to their constituents a false benign microcosmic picture of the universe which is in reality the steady devouring march of nothingness against all existence, human or non-human, individual or collective' (p. 39). The ego is ineradicable and draws everything into its net of nothingness. Where then is the autonomy of the self? And how can the lessons that one imbibes from the epics be deemed salutary, considering that Rama abandons his faithful and pure wife Sita, 'such indeed is ego's secret hatred of life itself, for Sita represents the energy of life', and that in the *Mahabharata* Krishna, overcome by the 'violent selectivity of egoistic love', is not above the manipulation of the moral law and the code of ethical conduct, with the result that the Kauravas are totally destroyed and the Pandavas emerge triumphant (pp. 42-43)? When, with every breath that a human being or an animal takes, 'millions of microbes are consigned to nothingness', what can be the sanctity of life given that nature herself is relentlessly committed to destruction?

The Buddha is agreed that the human species has not abided by 'life's deeply embedded code of ecological honour', but in this violation it stands in sinister and singular isolation. Non-human life exemplifies admirable ecological restraint and discipline, and though that may be

largely instinctual, 'this fact only highlights the 'naturalness' of such discipline and does not undermine its reality or wisdom' (p. 41). There is no inherent flaw in 'the nature and process of life as such', for the 'ecological evil' that man commits is rooted in 'individual and collective ego', and originates largely in his unhealthy and unreflective modes of living. More pointedly, acclaims the Buddha, let us celebrate not denigrate nothingness, for nothingness exemplifies most dramatically and magnanimously the nature of self-limitation. In a remarkable passage, Gandhi has the Buddha say: 'Look at the vastness of space within which are manifest all worlds everywhere, including our sun and moon and earth and this blessed forest and all of us inquirers assembled here. That any manifestation at all is permitted within it by the limitless vastness of space is a miracle of self-restraint, the austerest ecological discipline conceivable, the purest ahimsa (non-violence)' (p. 44). Nothingness competes with no other things, it knows no duality; it is thus fulness, not the annihilatory and devouring malevolence represented by the nihilists.

Though the Buddha is well capable of conducting the defence of advaita and of Indian spiritual traditions, other inquirers and debaters shoulder that task too. There remains, in particular, the problem of the abandonment of the chaste Sita by Rama after his victory at arms over Ravana on the grounds that she may well have been defiled by her long captivity in Lanka. What kind of example can Rama set to others if he—the exemplar hero, the ideal husband, the just king—who is cast in the very image of God can behave with such apparent ignobility towards Sita (literally, 'furrow') who is not only his wife but his energy, the embodiment of sacred aboriginal spirituality? Here Gandhi steps in with a remarkable interpretation put in the mouth of a traditional storyteller. Let us recall that the Ramayana begins with an account of 'ecological violation': one of a pair of curlew birds in love-play is shot dead by a hunter's arrow, and thus the other is separated from its mate for no justifiable reason. Later, when Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana live out their exile in the forest, and Sita sights the golden deer Marica, Rama takes its life to gift the deer to her, and again the code of 'ecologically honorable hunting' has been violated. The killing is no doubt unavoidable, even desirable, for Marica is none other than a demon in disguise, and its killing sets in chain the series of events that must lead to the inexorable end; nonetheless, 'Marica is separated from a possible deer mate at the level of manifestation' (p. 21). If the human violation of ecological restraint that nature exercises is only at the level of appearance, that is in order to sustain life and civilization, then the atonement by Rama and Sita, which can only be satisfied by their separation, is likewise at the phenomenological level only. Victory and reunion, argues the storyteller, had not made Rama and Sita forget that they had to pay a price for their disruption of the ecological

order, a disruption that entailed 'grief and privation and isolation for dependent creatures', and by so doing strengthen the ecological discipline of their subjects (p. 51). As Gandhi further notes, when the Ramayana story passed into the hands of chauvinists and patriarches, the interpretation of Sita's abandonment by Rama became warped. 'The ecologically educative separation of Rama and Sita by mutual consent', he suggests, 'became distorted into the sexist banishment of Sita by Rama for suspected infidelity in Lanka' (p. 21).

But what of Ananya and the relationship of her story to Sita-ki-Rasoi? Gandhi's imaginative reconstruction makes Ananya, as the original account and other retellings most emphatically do not, the subject: 'Sita's Kitchen' is the true subalternist history. When Ananya speaks, it is the voice of advaita, for Ananya is literally the Self, without the Other, undivided. It is as a harlot that she is brought to the gathering of young people in the forest; put 'outside the circle of love', she feels besides 'the wretchedness of being a watchkeeper, merely, and not the wearer of jewelry' (p. 70). The circle represents 'the increasingly closed world of dominant contemporary humanity' from which are excluded outcasts like herself and non-human life. That gathering of revelers in the forest is unlike the Rasa Lila of Krishna every night of the full moon,<sup>2</sup> from which no gopi (cowherdess) feels excluded, for each gopi has Krishna as her partner. Continuing her narrative, Ananya relates how she had been told by her mother of a 'sacred site known as Sita's Kitchen which is where the nourishing power of the Divine Mother is concentrated'; it is here that, 'into the bowels of the earth, that Sita had descended', and where she remains. 'In the language of non-duality', the language of advaita and equally of Buddha's nothingness, 'we would say that the earth is Sita, vibrant self-realization, set in the endlessly unfurling sky of emptiness which is Rama' (p. 70). To Sita-ki-Rasoi, then, Ananya repairs with the ornaments which she believes have been entrusted to her care, and these are offered in atonement for 'humanity's escalating sin of exclusion' (p. 71).

Thus, with the story of Ananya, Gandhi returns us to the powerful presence of Sita-ki-Rasoi. Gandhi's welding together of advaita and the teachings of the Buddha is a bold move, and though professional philosophers may find his readings problematic, there is a great deal to recommend in Gandhi's hermeneutics. In any case, this is too large a question to entertain here, and it is to the central symbolic significance of Sita-ki-Rasoi that we must return. As Sita's Kitchen once fed the clan of Raghu, so Gandhi invites our attention to it in order that it may nourish the soul of India today. We live not by food alone, but by spiritual leavings. The insistent demand for the 'relocation' of the Babri Masjid is now, when it is no longer in existence; without meaning, but perhaps we may still learn that it is really our consciousness that we need to relocate 'within areas of ecological responsibility and

imagination, because secessionism and hegemonism in the contemporary world 'are not political improprieties, merely, but violations of cultural and spiritual ecology' (p. 110). If we may extend Gandhi's reading somewhat: In a country where the Babri Masjid—or, as some would call it, the Rama Janmasthan—and Sita-ki-Rasoi stood together, cheek by jowl, for nearly five hundred years, the two are now severed; and once again, pressured by ungrateful citizens and ignorant pupils, Sita is consigned to a lonely existence. We can only hope that the banishment of the Babri Masjid from our midst is, like the banishment of Sita by Rama from the kingdom of Ayodhya, at the level of appearance alone; or else, if that 'otherness' acquires an ontological reality, the fall of the Babri Masjid will surely and most unfortunately be remembered as, in Gandhi's wonderfully evocative phrase, 'advaita's waterloo'. In this little gem of a book, Ramchandra Gandhi gives us a great deal to hope for, and shows that he is in every respect worthy of those great traditions of Indian spirituality which he has so masterfully and yet with utter humility brought before us for our introspection.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Thailand, I might note parenthetically, has an important ancient Buddhist city by the name of Ayuthaya, also known as Ayuthea or Ayudhya, undoubtedly by way of homage to Buddhist Ayodhya in India. The present-day Ayodhya in India, however, may not be the Ayodhya of the Valmiki *Ramayana* or of the Buddhist texts, a matter too complicated to be considered here.
2. That the lila is under the full moon is not insignificant, for such a lila is 'under the sponsorship of enlightenment' (p. 57). *Sita's Kitchen* is replete with these extraordinary insights. The Buddha, Gandhi adds instructively, was born on a night of the full moon, and his death and enlightenment also occurred on nights of the full moon; Mahavira's birth, enlightenment, and death, on the other hand, all took place on moonless nights. 'The full moon represents the power of illumined mind which, in the form of the Buddha, came to the aid of that sunless age'; by way of contrast, on a moonless night, 'when, symbolically, neither the sun of self-realization nor the full moon of enlightenment is at hand, we have to walk on the earth very gently, lest we hurt fellow living beings. Ahimsa (non-violence) is born, Mahavira is born' (pp. 22-23).



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Re-viewing a Domain*

Patricia Uberoi, ed., *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 502, Rs. 500.

The postulation of the domestic/familial as a domain distinct and separate from the politico-jural seems to underly the field of family and kinship studies. Most of the concepts it deploys have been fashioned in the light of this perception. Interestingly, a similar delineation, positing a domestic/public opposition, articulates the field of gender studies as well. Across these two areas of study, one encounters a tendency to approach the first term in both dualist frames (viz., the domestic), as having to do with 'natural' or pre-social facts. In both, biological reproduction is placed at the centre of the domestic or familial realm. Such basic coordinates of family and kinship analysis as notions of descent, the family, marriage rules and kinship terminologies are all built on this assumption. Increasingly though, especially from within the realm of gender studies, there has been a persistent questioning, in recent times, of the basis of such oppositional spheres, arguing instead that the domains must be perceived as socially constructed, deriving their form, content and meaning from definite historical and cultural junctures. One must pause to ask, therefore, what these theoretical developments spell for the field of kinship studies? What does it mean to speak about *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*? A re-articulation of 'universalistic' principles, a recognition of cultural specificities, or quite simply, a celebration of difference?

The anthology under review seeks to provide an account—largely descriptive, but also theoretical—of 'the variety of family types and kinship practices in the South Asian region' (p. 37). By way of contextual history, the editor offers, in her Introduction, a narrative of changing explanatory paradigms in family and kinship studies. But as she points out, the direction taken by family and kinship studies in India has largely been reflective of trends in Western social science, a fact manifest in the preponderance of evolutionist, functionalist and structuralist approaches to the field. Tracing theoretical developments in the field after the 1950s, Uberoi cites in particular

three important lines of analysis: Dumont's attempt to reinterpret Indian kinship in structuralist terms, the cultural approach represented by Schneider and the recasting of questions from within feminist theory. While the first is representative of a whole genre of marriage and kinship studies (loosely termed alliance theory), the same cannot be said of either the cultural or gender perspectives. The culturalist analysis of kinship attempted by David Schneider was distinctive in its assertion that the concept of 'kinship' itself needed to be 'denaturalized' and subjected to critical scrutiny. Refusing to begin with a universally valid map of genealogical relations, Schneider drew attention to the different modes in which cultures construct conceptions of kinship. He argued, much more vigorously than his predecessors, that kinship is not a pre-existing, natural domain, but a social fact constituted through native/folk ideas of 'relatedness'. Barring a couple of exceptions (Das, Madan) which reflect this cultural shift in the field, a majority of the articles in the collection seem to work wholly within structuralist or structural-functional assumptions. In like manner, while a few articles (Nongbri, Sharma) do raise issues of gender asymmetry with reference to family, marriage and kinship, they do not go far enough. For, as will be suggested, extending a gender framework to kinship cannot be a simple task of grafting, challenging as it does the very foundations of the kinship domain. In addition to the desire to offer a gender perspective on kinship, the anthology has been guided by certain other considerations. As the editor notes, besides incorporating recent developments in the field, it also intends to provide easy access to classic and contemporary writings on Indian kinship. It seeks to offer an insight into trends to transformation as well, especially in the Indian family. So then, how do the selections approximate to these organizing principles? In posing this question, the stress is not on the appropriateness or otherwise of particular articles, i.e., not on the issue of 'representativeness' of the anthology (a consideration which necessarily underlies every edited work), but on its 'representational' thrust, i.e., its imaging of the themes of family and kinship studies.

Section I addresses an important question—whether we can speak of an Indian kinship system? Or, are there systems of marriage and kinship that are structurally distinct? Though the editor makes an attempt to link these questions to a 'modern' pluralist context (see p. 33 especially), it is clear that the articles in this section, speaking in the light of their distinct ethnographic data, are concerned primarily with regional variations and similarities in marriage and kinship structures, and only secondarily with questions of the 'whole'. Recognizing this differential emphasis is crucial, for, while the issue of variations and homogeneity in kinship practices is indeed important, a more complete understanding would require a reference outside of kinship, especially to how the Indian totality itself is to be

conceptualized. The first excerpt, from Karve's 'Kinship Organization in India', offers a glimpse into her attempt to sketch a morphology of the Indian kinship system. Using kin terms to compare different kinship structures in the north, south and east, she links these differences to the major language families (sanskritic, dravidian, etc) prevalent in the regions. She locates marriage as lying at the core of a north-south contrast, focusing on differential structures of marital exchange and variations in marital arrangements as seen from the position of the woman. The alliance theory of kinship too centralizes marriage in contrasting north and south Indian kinship structures. Dumont, in 'North India in relation to South India', draws attention to the similarities in the two marriage structures to the extent that the value attached to affinity through marriage is definitive. Rather than analyzing kinship terminologies, he focuses on ritualized gift-giving as indicative of kin relations, especially the relations of asymmetry implicit in them. Trautmann offers, in the selection included here, a historical perspective on the Dravidian kinship system, proposing that the ideological dominance of north over south led to the convergence of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan kinship systems. He suggests that, as a result, one finds a uniform incidence of the ideology of 'kanyadana' throughout India, presenting wife-takers as superior to wife-givers.

Section II covers the various descent theories of kinship. The exploration of kinship systems through descent or line of inheritance contrasts with alliance theory, which emphasizes relations established through marriage. Some articles in this section explore the nature, functions of and changes in unilineal descent groups (Shah, Nongbri), a few others correlate this with caste and class structures in the community (Gough). Others seek to interpret how descent ideologies interweave with the cultural practices of specific communities (Das). However, neither a sensitivity to the various rules of lineage and inheritance, nor to descent ideologies really appears to make a dent as far as the delineation of domains is concerned. For, across different systems, women continue to be associated with the domestic domain, and excluded from the public, political realm dominated by men. Both descent and alliance theories, indeed the entire family and kinship theory, rest on a distinction between the domestic and public, where the latter is defined in biological/natural terms, juxtaposed against a politico-jural realm defined in cultural terms. At a time when such oppositional frameworks are increasingly coming under criticism from all quarters, especially from feminist theory, it is imperative today to rethink the core concepts and methods it fosters. Unfortunately, this is an imperative which is yet to translate itself into the field of family and kinship studies in India.

Section III includes writings on marriage in India. The papers by Gough and Berreman are descriptive accounts, documenting marriage

practices in two diverse communities, a matrilineal and a polyandrous one. One manifestation of the relations of asymmetry between bride-giving and bridgetaking households, as it enters into a modern idiom, is the practice of dowry payments in contemporary India. The articles by Sharma and Caplan seek to trace some aspects of this practice, underlining the fact that far from constituting the girl's property or inheritance, dowry is invariably removed from the control of the bride. The majority of writings, however, are preoccupied with analysing the structural implications of different kinds of marriage alliances (Trautmann, Madan, Donnan, Pocock). Not in itself, but in terms of what it comes to represent, this preoccupation can be criticized on a few counts. For one, to adopt a structuralist position is, in effect, to blot out a gender perspective on the domain. Theorists of marriage alliance influenced by Levi-Strauss speak of relations between groups as structured by the exchange of women by and between men, where, it is the form of marital exchange which is the focus of study, and not the content. Such theories, which are definitely influential in Indian kinship studies, imply a specific conceptualization of women as object/signs, who play no active role and who are merely owned and exchanged between groups of men.

The exclusion of a gender perspective is only part of the problem. Theorists like Bourdieu, setting out from other starting points, reject the Levi-Straussian obsession with formalistic rules of marriage, underlining the limitations of emphasizing merely the communicative and exchange aspects of marriage and kinship systems. He suggests instead an analysis of marriage *strategies* as a fruitful way of seeing how people reproduce asymmetrical relations of production and reproduction. This would mean attending to the modes in which people, in the course of their practices of daily living, negotiate the terms and principles underlying the realms of family and kinship. Though this has sometimes been read as emphasizing 'practice' at the cost of the 'symbolic', it is crucial to see that marriage and kinship practices are definitely lived and experienced symbolically. For what is practical and everyday intermeshes closely with the symbolic/ideological representation of communities. Perhaps practitioners of family and kinship studies need, therefore, to shift attention from analyzing genealogically defined relations (as in alliance and descent theory), to studying culturally meaningful relations by attending to marriage and kinship as 'practice', i.e., as strategies. To do this would also reveal the social and ideological constitution of domains, thus enabling us to question the naturalness of domestic-public demarcations.

It is here that some more points of convergence and divergence between gender and kinship studies can be located. For one, both these domains are concerned with relations between people defined by difference. Both in the case of male/female difference in gender studies

and the genealogical grid in kinship studies, the tendency is to take difference for granted, viz., to assume it as a natural, biological or pre-social fact. It seems crucial to question this assumption, and to argue that these are culture-specific constructions which are negotiated differentially. To an increasing extent, the gender domain, unlike family and kinship studies, has been responsive to these challenges and redefinitions. Given these developments, introducing gender questions could well work to subvert the kinship domain by querying the very basis on which it rests. But, especially in the Indian context, it can be argued that to open out to gender within family/ kinship studies has other implications as well. Above all, it allows us to bring to the fore the issue of *différence*—to ask how difference comes to be defined within (and across) these realms and to explore what meanings are invested in it at various levels, not merely in terms of the range of rights/ duties attached to specific kinship statuses, but also how these (and other) differences are claimed, lived and negotiated across varying social contexts. Equally important is the fact that tracing the paths of difference opens up, in turn, the possibility of posing sharper questions regarding the nature of hierarchy, whether with reference to gender, or across relations of kinship.

Tracing the cross-currents of social change on family and household organization is the main concern of the final section. Most of the literature on the Indian family, though overwhelmingly preoccupied with the joint family, has failed to address a number of definitional problems. The article by Madan draws attention to certain misleading assumptions *vis-a-vis* the joint family in various debates regarding modernization; analyzing the Hindu joint family, he shows how conventional perceptions of this domain have failed to differentiate between residential, coparcenary and genealogical criteria in their definitions. Wadley and Derr document the demographic factors influencing family structure, and its responses to pressures of modernization in a local context. Noting that there have been a number of attempts, of late, to clarify these definitional issues, the editor argues that it is now necessary for students of the family to 'go beyond mere description of the form or morphology of the household to an examination of its functions and activities' (p. 389). She cites social reproduction as one example of its functions, especially as achieved through the process of child socialization. Beteille's paper scrutinizes the Indian family as a major site for the reproduction of various inequalities, where social privileges and disprivileges are transferred across generations. Offering a criticism of the notion of family as a single, non-conflictual unit, Sen's article draws attention to the differential allocation of food, medical care and educational resources within the family, an allocation which is often based on gender. Household structure and functioning thus comes to be linked in these readings to issues of inequality, including gender inequality.

Undoubtedly, a wide and substantial range of themes, emphases and theorists have been brought together in this volume. What is troubling, however, is the almost effortless slippage (evident in the representational thrust and organization of the readings), from the analysis of asymmetry to that of inequality—a shift which remains unaddressed throughout the volume and the narrative it weaves. In this light, it is perhaps necessary to reiterate that the concepts 'asymmetry' and 'inequality' articulate two different idioms altogether, with asymmetry belonging largely to the discursive realm of hierarchical relations and inequality being appended to the equality principle. Any shift from one to the other, therefore, is not just terminological, but conceptual, and in not recognizing this, we obscure and leave unresolved several questions regarding hierarchy, modernity and even the nature of kinship (and gender) relations.

SEEMANTHINI NIRANJANA  
Department of Sociology  
Goa University

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Culture and Development*

Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *Society, Culture, Development*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1991, Rs 225

Professor Ramakrishna Mukherjee's book *Society, Culture, Development* is different from a usual book. Though generally in every research paper or book the main text is supplemented by footnotes, notes occupy almost half of the total number of pages in this book. The book has only three chapters, viz., Society, Culture and Development, as the title of the book suggests. There is no introduction and neither any concluding chapter or epilogue. The book is a product of author's discussions and seminars in three universities in the United States.

Though apparently the three chapters seem to be dealing independently with the three concepts, there is a common frame-work and argument which unites the three chapters. He starts with an abstract universal notion of society in the first chapter and comes down to concrete issues and problems of development of India in the third chapter. In the first two chapters, he develops a general theoretical framework to understand and analyse society and culture. In the third chapter, Mukherjee applies his framework and offers an alternative way of looking at, and a method of dealing with, the problems of development in a specific society. He takes-up concrete issues like population control and refugee settlements and shows how the economic approach fails to effectively deal with such critical problems.

A society, for Mukherjee, is 'denominated by the characteristics of the groups the individuals form. It is not a random assortment of individuals'. Sounding like a functionalist and speaking in a universalistic language, Mukherjee argues that whether voluntarily or involuntarily human individuals form various kinds of groupings and aggregates which help them fulfil their 'basic necessities'. The purpose of forming these groupings could either be ego-centric (subjective) or an inexorable course of circumstances. The relation between subjective will of the individuals and objective circumstances is governed by the universal goal of human kind which in turn is conceptualised as four cardinal values, viz., survival, security,

prosperity and mental progress. Though formulated in Europe during the period of enlightenment, the author argues that these are perennially mentioned in all philosophies and they provide the motive power for human history.

The social groupings formed by individuals for realization of the four cardinal values have been viewed from different perspectives by different social scientists. While the consensus oriented view-point stresses on the 'structured' nature of human relations, the so-called conflict perspective focusses more on the processual aspect of human society. But for Mukherjee that the society is always in a state of dynamic equilibrium. One has to simultaneously think of structure as well as process.

Another problematic identified by Mukherjee is the tendency among social scientists to give primacy to social structure over social process while analysing/studying society. He argues that the process always precedes structure because a structure denotes the resultant of a process or a set of processes. Structure being deducible from the identifiable groups in society, it draws one's immediate attention. While processes can only be inferred. So, far a more viable social analysis, the author argues for a process-structure-process frame of reference over the structure-process-structure syndrome.

While dealing with the concept of culture, Mukherjee centres his discussion around the issue of relationship between society and culture. He is critical of the tendency to treat culture either as a dependent variable or as a completely independent variable. Since culture is not capable of self-production it can not be treated as an independent variable. And there are obvious problems with treating culture as a completely dependent variable. He also disagrees with those who treat culture as intervening variable. For him the culture products present a permanent union with other social processes and thus operate as a symbolic variable.

In the chapter on development, where he also tries to apply his theoretical framework, Mukherjee begins with identification of two notions of development. First, that views development as a process of unfolding of the latent and second, where development is conceived as a regulating instrument that checks the possibilities of undergrowth and overgrowth. Though he focusses his discussion on the Third World Societies, and more specifically on India, his notion of development and other theoretical categories are universalistic. He even uses biological analogy to elaborate his notion of development. As he writes, 'All living creatures and at all times in their life span are liable to undergrowth or overgrowth with reference to the normative growth process. . . . The same is true for the organism labeled society' (pp. 89-90).

His main argument is against the dominant mode of thinking among economists and other social scientists who reduce growth to economic



growth and tend to treat development and growth as same thing. Even the sociologists who talk about culture and social instruction view economic development as primary process and development is seen as 'unilateral course of change from what is enveloped in a nation state or in the world society of humans' (p. 108).

It is this simplistic and reductionist approach that has led to failure in a 'systematic pursuit of the quest for realizing the cardinal valuation of human kind' (p. 108).

Indian planning for development also remains within this economistic perspective where development is viewed as a value free process that can be translated through a mathematical formula. The existing state of affairs marked by an all pervasive social crisis reflected in growing class inequalities, caste and communal problems is a result of the 'false diagnosis', i.e., the assumption that economic growth is the panacea for all evils. Naturally for Mukherjee unless the symbiotic relation between economy, policy and culture is realized, the corrective measures applied for cure may not even ameliorate the symptoms. The reflective minds of the specialists in respective fields of social sciences should converge and devise such exogenous elements for inducing those changes in society which will simultaneously remove undergrowth and overgrowth and rejuvenate the normative growth process.

What is fascinating in the book is the critique of the dominant paradigm of development. His formulation of a symbiotic relation among society, culture and economy is an important and useful contribution. However, one feels uncomfortable with his language. His uncritical use of biological analogy and terminology of medical sciences provides no scope for recognition of the fact that above all development is a political process. Though he often refers to Marx and the fact of social inequalities, there is little scope for historical analysis or recognition of class realities in his universal framework.

SURINDER JODKHA  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Lesser Known Faiths*

Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (ed.), *Rites And Beliefs In Modern India*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 111, price not stated.

The new cultural studies in India no longer perceive the subalterns as passive recipients of cultural traditions but regard them as active agents who through their quotidian resistance, construct, interpret, and assign cultural meanings on their own. According to these studies, the subalterns in their day to day life, through reinvention and reinterpretation of family rituals, myths and beliefs, constantly construct their own identity in order to counter the hegemonic cultural practices of the upper caste Hindus.

This slim volume as a contribution towards an understanding of popular rites and beliefs, contains papers on rites and beliefs in modern India, presented at the Tenth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies held in Venice in 1988. The papers mainly deal with various popular rituals and beliefs which have been treated as marginal in the dominant Hinduism. Interspersed all through the papers is the argument that the diverse socio-cultural practices within the popular traditions, challenge on the one hand the existing caste hierarchy and other oppressive social norms by inverting the existing order. On the other hand, they are not liberative enough for their practitioners, particularly for women.

The paper on rituals and beliefs among the Hindus and Muslims of a North Indian village during the post-partum period by Jeffery et al., elaborates how the 'ethnic' differences are expressed through public celebration of child birth which not only delineates the importance of the social location of the new born baby but also devalue women despite the glorification of motherhood. The authors show how the devaluation of women takes place through different ways of greeting the new born baby and the mother immediately after the birth which in turn determines the nature of domestic rituals and beliefs as well as the position of the mother during the post-partum period.

Shalini Randeria's paper is a significant contribution to the study of the world of untouchables and their own consciousness about the notion

of untouchability. The paper highlights how the belief in permanent pollution due to professional contact with dead bodies and other excrements, among members of all castes leads to the seclusion of one particular caste even among the untouchables. In the case of Gujarat, they are the Bhangis. According to the author, it is not only the upper castes who construct the caste hierarchy and the notion of permanent and temporary pollution, but the untouchables too, think through the same category of upper caste discourse, account for the hierarchy among themselves. At the same time, she points out, that the untouchables' multiple discourses on untouchability is a transgression from and even a protest against the upper caste discourse on untouchability. According to her, the latter's orchestration of untouchability is an attempt 'to keep the untouchables in their present marginalized position and to block all avenues of future mobility' (p. 46). Hence, the untouchables have got their own myths about their origin which in defiance of the upper caste discourse 'emphasize that the higher status which they aspire to in the future is nothing new: it is merely a attainment of their original, and hence rightful place, in the social universe' (p. 46).

Jackie Assayag in his paper on modern devadasis has taken up the well known aspects of the life of the devotees of Goddess Yellamma in Karnataka. What is new is his argument is that even though poverty has pushed many women into prostitution through dedication to the temple, the Jogamma's (devadasi's) role as prostitute is in accordance with the Hindu notion of Stridharma. i.e., women's duty as sexual beings. Hence, through the use of religion and various symbols, the Jogammas have attained a relatively high status within the ritual ambience of Hindu society. But what has been ignored by Assayag is the fact that the higher ritual and religious status of Jagammas has not in reality transformed into higher status either for women or for the lower castes from whom the girls are recruited for prostitution. In fact many young girls and women have been forced into prostitution without their consent in order to feed the family while the upper castes used religion and rituals to justify their marginalised position.

The paper on Kula Teyvam worship in Tamilnadu (lineage God/Goddess worship) effectively argues that in the wake of the disintegration of village religious customs and the Kula Teyvam worship, the Aiyappan cult has acquired enormous popularity among the Tamils. According to the author, the Aiyappan cult emulating many of the quality of the village cult departs from the same by being more egalitarian attenuating traditional village and caste hierarchies. However, this cult excludes women who played an important role in the Kula Teyvam worship.

The last paper in this rather important book is on Humorous Hinduism. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi while tracing jokes on religious matters by the Tamils through a review of humorous religious literature contends that 'though joking about religious matters is not, of

course, the most common Tamil attitude towards them the fact that some famous writers have contributed to humorous religious literature shows that in Tamil culture there is no objection, in principle, to 'joking about religion' (p. 96). He shows how numerous inversions of roles of Rama and other characters of Ramayana, mainly ridiculing Rama, has been written capriciously and how they have survived as popular literature among the Tamils.

At a time when the belligerent Hindu communalists are trying to homogenise Hinduism by denying the space to popular Hinduism, this book makes a significant contribution towards an understanding of various lesser known faiths and cults within Hinduism which, as ideological resistance, even if disguised, muted and veiled, challenges the dominant and subjugating practices of upper castes/Brahmanic Hinduism. However, most of the papers in this otherwise fascinating book, remain anthropological devoid of any historical enquiries into the evolution of various popular cultural practices. Moreover, the orientalist predilections of the authors, evident in their narratives of popular culture, lead them to essentialise popular practices and present them as internally harmonious and tolerance towards other religious faiths and beliefs. This is indeed contestable given the ground level reality.

ANANDHI. S.  
Indian Social Institute  
New Delhi

## OBITUARY

### *Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya*

To resurrect spontaneous or naive materialism in the ancient thought of Indian civilisation which has been portrayed as being uniquely spiritual is a task of immense value. One of the most significant contributions in the direction of a rational reconstruction of the evolution of scientific ideas and naive materialism in Indian antiquity was made by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. The publication of his pioneering work *Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism* (1959) with its scholarly rigour provided an academic credibility to the project, which he pursued till the very end of his life. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's pursuit was a result as much of his commitment to values of scholarship as to the progressive ideas and communist movement. Described by Walter Ruben as a 'thought-reformer', he was in Ruben's words "conscious of his great responsibility towards his people living in a period of struggle for national awakening and of world-wide fighting of the forces of progress, humanism and peace against imperialism and militarism. He has written this book (*Lokayata*) against the old fashioned conception that India was and is the land of dreamers and mystics".

Lack of secularisation of thought and philosophy of ancient India makes a dispassionate discussion of underlying ideas very difficult. The terminology used and the concepts deployed in any discussion of Indian philosophy even now evoke religious and even ritualistic connotations. The manner in which the two classics of Indian heritage were visualised and received on the television network in recent times more than illustrates the point. In such a context any effort to explicate Indian philosophy with a secular intent demands tremendous intellectual courage. Over three decades ago when Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya undertook his studies, the task must have been still more arduous. That he never flinched in the face of isolation in his own profession only demonstrates the courage of his convictions.

A rational reconstruction of the Lokayata school of materialist philosophy in ancient India is made all the more difficult by the fact that the medieval compendium of Indian philosophy *Sarva Darsana Samgraha* (14th century AD) which enjoys considerable popularity among students and scholars was authored by an advaita vedantist,

Madhavacharya, who was the chief abbot of the Sringeri Math. He naturally portrays the materialist school at its worst.

Etymologically Lokayata means 'that which is prevalent among the people and also that which is essentially this worldly'. The ordinary derivation of the word Carvaka is Caru and Vak; that is charming or alluring speech. It is well known that no Lokayata text has come down to us. The principle tenets of the school can only be restored on the basis of the expositions that are found in the purvapaksa (the method of giving adversary's position in order to refute it) of many Brahminical or Buddhist philosophical works. Reference to Lokayata is found in the puranas and epics, in grammatical literature, in the treatise on state craft, *Arthasasthra* and even in dramas for popular consumption such as *Prabodhacandrodaya*. By the references made to Lokayata in ancient texts, it can be established that this view of materialism was certainly pre-Buddhist and even pre-Upanisadic, though it is difficult to place it precisely.

The two aspects that the Lokayata school in particular sought to demonstrate were that no Karman exists and that pratyaksa is the only means of knowledge. Both these attacked the basic propositions of the Vedic orthodoxy.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's scholarly study of 'proto-materialism' in Indian thought was a big blow to the assiduously cultivated view of Indian philosophy hitherto held that Indian philosophy's sole concern was the concept of Brahman, the one and only reality. He not only established the indepth study of various strands of Indian philosophy as a serious academic task, but also contributed significantly in changing the popular perception of Indian philosophy.

Not that scholars were not aware of the Carvaka school before the publication of *Lokayata*. Unfortunately most of this knowledge was derived from Madhavacharya's account which does not agree with the other works. Moreover, whatever is available from the traditional texts is not found to be internally consistent. In *Lokayata* was Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's pioneering effort to provide a coherent understanding of Lokayata. His Marxist methodology led him to attempt to answer two basic questions. "First, what could be the ultimate material basis of the primitive *deha-vada* and the primitive rituals related to it and how, at the stage at which these were originally evolved, could these be connected with the mode of securing the material means of subsistence? Secondly, what was the course of development this archaic outlook eventually underwent?" Thus dispelling the hold of a uncompromising idealistic view of Indian philosophy, *Lokayata* recognised that the primitive proto-materialism forms the substratism of the Lokayata school of thought.

Acutely aware of the "incomplete separation of religion from philosophy" in India, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya undertook rigorous study to discuss "what is living and what is dead in Indian philosophy." He underlined the need for taking the ideas of the best and noblest minds to people "to inspire them to create a new intellectual climate replacing the muck now dominating". He sought, through his critical studies and popular expositions, to familiarise the readers with the rich tradition of Indian philosophy and the pluralism of Indian thought. He argued against the so-called "interpretation of synthesis" according to which different philosophical systems of India were like successive steps that led to the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. Such is the variety and simultaneous development of a number of alternative philosophical systems that the study of Indian philosophy has always been marked by the study of various systems that are distinct and have held contradictory views on various central issues. If any single issue is considered from the point of view of different systems one can clearly see the fierce contention of ideas with which the Indian thought has developed. For instance, the atomic hypothesis evokes an array of views that cover all possibilities. While Jains do not doubt the atomic hypothesis, the vedanta definitely opposes it. While Nyaya-Vaisesikas are champions of the hypothesis, one can find among Buddhists both the opposing groups, the atomists and anti-atomists. The significance of Debiprasad's work on Indian philosophy is heightened in the general atmosphere of strident postures to divert this rich thought of its diversity and multiplicity of views.

Philosophical cognition of reality is inextricably linked with its natural scientific cognition. It is, therefore, not surprising that his studies in the history of philosophy of ancient India should have led Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya to undertake studies in the history of science of the same period. In 1977 he published *Science and Society in Ancient India* where in he discussed the source books of Indian medicine, particularly *Caraka-Samhita*. Debiprasad maintained in general terms that the physician in ancient India was concerned with medicine and medicine alone and that the medical views of this period were remarkably free from super-naturalism. For the strange amalgam found in the texts of natural science and regimented religion he offered the explanation: "My point is that in spite of all that is strange in the medical compilations in their extant versions, it is possible to identify the hard core of natural science in these on which were imposed—evidently later and presumably for the purpose of evading the censorship of the law-makers who insist on abject surrender to the fundamentals of regimented religion—an assorted heap of religious and quasi-religious ideas and attitudes with no scientific significance whatsoever." His interpretation consisted in asserting that "anything found in the medical compilation in its present form, therefore, cannot

be taken on its face value" and "alien elements" are in the nature of "ransom offered to counter-ideology" to evade the censorship of law-givers. "Counter ideology" is defined to mean the "ideological requirement of regimented religions going bluntly against that of science." This may seem to overstate the case for pure science in India.

Naive or proto-materialism in consonance with the material and conceptual development of the period tried to answer questions, both social and natural in terms of fragmentary knowledge and observation in opposition to blind faith. As such, while its important contribution in providing prerequisites for later forms of materialism cannot be denied, it has to be demarcated from the latter.

It is the process of evolution of knowledge through an interaction of naive materialism and speculation that gives rise to contradictory elements present in the early history of social thought. That is why involuntary admissions of the truth of materialism are found in a number of idealist thinkers of the time just as involuntary intrusion of idealist concepts surface in the thought of materialist thinkers.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's prolific writings provided the critical basis on which one could take pride in the achievements of Indian civilisation. With its own specificities, the ancient Indian civilisation made as much contribution to the growth of human knowledge as any other. The ancient Indian thought, philosophy, scientific knowledge was sustained by pluralism of ideas. That is what constituted its strength. The cacophony that is trying to strait-jacket Indian thought in the name of religion is damaging the very civilisation in the name of which it seeks to speak. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's work was motivated to overturn the existing popular consciousness of Indian philosophical thought. His pioneering work provides the wherewithal with which the battle of the minds can be fruitfully joined.

RAJENDRA PRASAD



*With Best Compliments from*

# **The Printers (Mysore) Limited**

No. 66, M.G. Road, Bangalore 560 001

*Proprietors of:*

DECCAN HERALD

PRAJAVANI

SUDHA

MAYURA

# SAHMAT PUBLICATIONS

## Children's Literature

Ped (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali & Malayalam) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Micky Patel	Rs 15
Garbar Ghotala (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali & Malayalam) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Suresh B.V.	Rs 15
Bansuri Wala (Hindi) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Arpita Singh	Rs 15
Bag Ki Sair (Hindi) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Vasudevan Akkitam	Rs 15
Holi (Hindi) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Mohandas N.N.	Rs 15
Sare Mausam Achhe (Hindi) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Neelima Sheikh	Rs 15
Kitaben (Hindi) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Surendran Nair	Rs 15
The Red Flower (English) by Safdar Hashmi, Illus. Mona Rai	Rs 15
Natak Ki Duniya (Hindi), Plays for children by Safdar Hashmi	Rs 20
Duniya Sabki (Hindi), Poems by Safdar Hashmi	Rs 20

## Books and other material dedicated to democratic and secular values

Apni Zaban (Hindi), Collection of Poems, Eds. Vishnu Nagar and Asad Zaidi	Rs 30
Yeh Aisa Samay Hai (Hindi), Collection of Poems, Eds. Vishnu Nagar and Asad Zaidi	PB Rs 60; HB Rs 150
Aaj Ka Path (Hindi), Collection of Stories, Eds. Vishnu Nagar and Asad Zaidi	PB Rs 60; HB Rs 150
Sampradaikta aur Sanskriti ke Sawal (Hindi), Essays by Irfan Habib, K.N. Panikkar, Prabhat Patnaik and Amartya Sen	Rs 10
Firkaparasti aur Tehzeeb ke Sawal (Urdu), Essays	Rs 10
Images and Words, A document of works by 400 painters, writers, photographers against communalism	Rs 50
Punchline, A Selection of Cartoons, Compiled by Madhuker Upadhyay	Rs 50
Anhad Garje (4 Audio cassettes), 3 hours of Sufi-Bhakti music (live recording)	Rs 120
Anhad Garje (Video), 3 hours of Sufi-Bhakti songs (live recording)	Rs 300
Safdar (Video)	Rs 125
Ayodhya 93 (Video), Directed by Virendra Saini	Rs 150
Artists Against Communalism (Audio)	Rs 25
Posters in Defence of Our Secular Tradition, Artists' Posters with Sufi-Bhakti poetry. (Artists: Vivan Sundaram, Shamshad, Manjit Bawa, M.F. Husain, Manu Parekh, Gopi Gajwani, Orijit Sen, Akbar Padamsee, Haku Shah, Neelima Sheikh, Gulam Sheikh, Nalini Malani)	Rs 25 each
Safdar (Poster)	Rs 10

## Other Publications

Right to Perform by Safdar Hashmi	Rs 50
Sahmat Papers (A compilation of press coverage of the activities of Sahmat till 1992)	Rs 105
Muktnaad/Hum Sab Ayodhya (A selection from writings in the press)	Rs 75
Chowk-Chowk Par Gali-Gali Mein-I (Street Plays)	Rs 25
Chowk-Chowk Par Gali-Gali Mein-II (Street Plays)	Rs 30
Moteram Ka Satyagrah (Play)	Rs 15

Available at:

**Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT)**

8 Vithalbhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi 110 001. Tel.: 371 1276

# Journal of ARTS & IDEAS

The **Journal of Arts & Ideas** is a serious, well-produced publication with researched, documented articles on various aspects of the visual and plastic arts, cinema, music, theatre, literature, architecture, and their interaction and relationship with political and social developments. Of its twenty-five issues to date, several have been special numbers devoted to themes such as Latin American Literature, Cinema, Cultural Nationalism, Architecture, Soviet Culture, Representations in History, Cultural Practice in India, Books and Authors, Modernity and Modernism.

The Journal has also organised a number of seminars which have brought together, in meaningful discussion, practitioners and theoreticians in art, literature and culture.

For subscriptions and any other information, write to:

Indira Chandrasekhar  
Journal of Arts & Ideas  
C-20 Outab Institutional Area  
New Delhi 110 016, India  
Telephone: 686 2924

## **Subscription Rates\***

### **Indian**

Individuals (4 issues)	: Rs. 100
Institutions & libraries (4 issues)	: Rs. 200

### **Overseas (in US dollars)**

Individuals (4 issues)	: \$ 30
Institutions & libraries (4 issues)	: \$ 50

(\* Rs. 10 extra banking charges for outstation cheques)

Single issue	: Rs. 25
Double issue	: Rs. 50

Back issues of the Journal (except a few) are available in compiled, bound volumes.